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MY FRIENDS AND I

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MY FRIENDS AND I

EDITED BY

JULIAN STURGIS

"THIS ABOVE ALL;—TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE."



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TO MY READERS.

THESE THREE TALES are of supreme interest to me: I admit it. My life is a busy life; and I have had small leisure at any moment of my career to turn a calmly scrutinizing eye upon my past. Is it a marvel, then, that I pause with pleasure for a little while to gaze upon myself? Here in this little book are three pictures of myself: one of the imaginative boy delaying amid the idle dreams of friendship, another of the young man on the threshold of practical life, a third of the strong runner in mid-career—three pictures which I contemplate with a sigh and with a smile. I am not discontented with them: I admit it.

In the first tale there is much which my mature taste condemns, an over-luxuriance of style, a certain intemperance in the loving descriptions of nature, an avowed contentment with a life spent in the idle observation of the careers

of other men. And yet, if the style be florid, is there not with it a freshness of boyhood, a breezy atmosphere of the dawn of life? If to be content in this stirring age with a life of mere observation be puerile enough, is there not yet some reason for pleasure in the keenness and accuracy of the observation itself? In my boyish hand was a weapon of which I did not know the value; but it was a bright and potent weapon none the less. In this power of accurate observation I recognize with pardonable pride that quality which, united with the single purpose of self-help, has made me the successful man I am. May I say this without undue vanity? May I hope that my words will be of some value to the young? Is not this a sufficient excuse for permitting the publication of these personal narratives? To train yourselves to accurate analysis of your fellow-men, and to learn how to use them for your own ends—these, my young friends and readers are the two secrets of a life like mine. In such a life I have found compensation for the loss of boyhood's sentimental dreams, for all the inevitable disappointments of existence.

Friendships fade from him, but the successful man stands firm. It may be that on that dizzy point where, like the eagle, he has placed himself, there is no room for a mate. Alone he has fought the solemn battle of life; he has been bold and cautious; with a single eye and for his own hand he has waged war upon the world, and has gotten the victory. Friends may have disappointed him; friends may have forgotten him; he does not complain. The hero of his boyish fancy has made no mark in the world; the comrade of his first struggles in political life has been alienated from him; she whom he chose to be closer than a friend, has been to him the greatest disappointment of all. But, come what disillusion may, he who is strong to help himself, and to make others help him in the world's great battle, will raise his head proudly, and with a wary eye on friends and foes alike, go on grandly self-confident from victory to victory.

With these few words for my readers I hand over the three stories, in which I have perused myself as in three mirrors, to Mr. Julian Sturgis, who has been for a long time, I believe, a prom-

ising young author. I know little of authors or of authorship, but I presume that I shall not be out of order in wishing this kind writer, who has promised to see the amateur's little book through the press, a real and substantial success.

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MICHAEL AND I

CHAPTER I.

MY belief in Michael Horatio Belbin has been the theme of ridicule. I know that in our set at Oxford we were sometimes called the Lion and the Jackal. Of course the jest was playful, and I was never foolish enough to resent it. It was one of Motherwell's jokes, and like himself was heavy. But our set was a good set, and I was wise enough to pay any price for the privilege of belonging to a society of which Michael was the center. I saw in Michael all those qualities which combine to make a successful man—an active appreciation of men and circumstances, clear foresight, consummate prudence, and inflexible purpose. I looked forward to a time when I should be the friend of a great man. His air of authority, which was perhaps excessive, his warm feelings and quick temper, seemed trifles in comparison with his clear vision and good sense. Perhaps I shut my eyes to his weaknesses; perhaps I

might have seen more clearly, had I chosen to see. I think I may say, without boasting, that I am not slow to detect the weak places in my friends. I delight in the exercise of my critical faculty. In Michael alone I believed without reserve. Michael, I felt sure, would live to be pointed out by the common finger, as the keen-sighted, practical, successful man. How far my faith was justified let my story show.

One fine autumn Michael and I, with three other men, occupied a cottage by the sea. We were a reading party, and we all read more or less. We all, to some extent, were stimulated by the extraordinary energy of my friend. He was so full—full even to overflowing—of life, that I sometimes doubted if he ever slept. I knew that he slept but little. I knew that at early hours, when I was fain to enjoy my soundest sleep, Michael was more wide awake than the village cock. In spring he was up before the cuckoo, and would help that tell-tale bird to call the feathered choir, who for his ears alone began their morning charm. Even in the darkness of a winter morning I

had often heard him declaiming in his room, or stumbling with sharp exclamation over the coal-scuttle in the passage. I, who confess that I am made of stuff less stern, had often started wide awake from dream of ghost or burglar, and recognizing the familiar tread, had smiled to think that I had such a friend, and so had gone to sleep again. It seemed, however, that sea air and devotion to study diminished even my powers of slumber. One morning soon after our arrival on the coast I found myself wide awake while it was yet dark. I tried to lose myself, but in vain. Then a happy thought struck me. For once I would astonish Michael; I would be up and abroad before him. As usual, I was foiled by the superior vigor of my friend. Michael had long since found the cottage too small to hold him. He had rushed out into the darkness and mist, had climbed the steep with winged feet, and stood like the herald Mercury to stare across the pathless sea. There I found him and hailed him with what breath my climb had left me.

He turned sharply at the sound of my

voice. "Hang it!" he cried fiercely, "what do *you* want?"

It was his way with me, and I understood him. "All right, Mike, old man," I answered, "I want nothing. I only came to look you up."

He looked at me for a full minute, peering in the dim light and frowning; then he burst out laughing, as I knew he would. "You are inevitable as death," he said, and turned again toward the sea.

I sat down behind his back and waited. I felt sure that he would address me in time, and I was not disappointed. He still looked away from me; but he spoke. "Pecker has asked Geordie to come here," he said.

In a moment I knew the cause of my friend's abrupt manner. "What cheek of Pecker!" I cried, with keen sympathy.

"He has a perfect right to ask whom he likes," retorted Michael, "without asking you."

"But how about you?" I asked; "if it hadn't been for you, Pecker wouldn't be of the party at all; you would have him; he ought to have consulted *you*."

"Not at all," said Michael, throwing up his chin, as he always did when he intended to end a discussion.

In spite of this well-known sign I was beginning another remark, when he strode down the steep before him to the shore. I was left alone to commune with the unresponsive sea. It was strangely early; and the air was sharpened by that peculiar chill which precedes and ushers in the dawn. I am especially sensitive to atmospheric influences. I knew that to follow Michael would be to lash him to frenzy. I wrapped myself in my virtue and my pilot-coat, and endeavored to enjoy the scene. Beneath my feet were low flat rocks, and seaweed both green and yellowish brown; beyond the rocks the sea lay rippling and gray under a light haze, which was mist away in the east, and softened the low level line of pink which promised the rising sun. The sky was of most delicate pale blue, and straight above my head a waning moon, like a strayed reveler, seemed ready to faint into a long line of fleecy cloud. Suddenly on the level sea was a flame (it seemed not a

thousand yards away) ; then an arch of red fire. Higher and higher it rose, until there was the full circle of the sun, like a great flame-colored ball on the cool floor of ocean, while in the misty east the pale rose deepened into violet. Brown birds darted on sea and shore, and swept upward by my head. There was a brisk tumult of life. As the sun climbed into the sky, a halo of yellow light was about him in the melted haze; and flat beneath him on his blue-gray plain a wide path shimmering golden-bronze spread to my feet. I am peculiarly sensitive to the beauties of nature. I was thrilled by this new birth of day, this daily miracle of Aphrodite ; I forgot to shiver. I enjoyed ; and then I noted the causes of my enjoyment, the details of the scene. When I had fixed these in my mind, I turned my eyes to where on the green slope, dewy and sparkling responsive to the sun, Michael strode away to the south-west. He was going with long strides like Achilles in the Shades. Truly it was better to be alive and on the goodly earth than a king among the squeaking ghosts. Not for Michael was

idle noting of the beauties of dawn, nor tissue-wasting sentimentalisms. Enough for him to sniff the keen clear air of morning; to prance eager for the battle of life; to cry ha-ha with the war-horse. He had seen the fiery sun; he had gazed unflinching as an eagle. In his every movement, as he went further and further away, was the promise of splendid success. What careers had I not imagined for this triumphant person! Now, as I strained eyes after his vanishing back, I felt that he must carve his way to success, that fortune was his fool, that my friend would be a great man. Ah, how little can the most thoughtful observer prophesy the future! A few days—but a very few days—would pass, and—but I will invoke no shadow to mar this stainless dawn.

CHAPTER II.

WHY had Michael insisted that Pecker should be of our party? It is a problem which we others had often discussed. The lad, whom I take to be almost mindless, would laugh at the question, and declare that there was no reason. Motherwell, who in his rare moments of depression becomes weakly sentimental, maintained with a sigh that it was an instance of Belbin's benevolence. I waited for the solution of the enigma, and I did not wait in vain. When that wonderfully successful schoolmaster, Mr. Trickett, became head of our college, poor little Pecker, who is known to the university authorities as the Rev. Stanley Betel, melted like a mist before the rising sun. The old man seemed twice as weak by the side of his young chief; the old school was seen in its full absurdity when contrasted with the new; the cobweb which had fluttered for generations on the lecturer's chair fell to the

sweep of the broom. The Rev. Stanley Betel was treated with courtesy; attendance at his lectures was made voluntary; there was no attendance at his lectures. He vanished behind his oak, and was seen but little of men. Michael Horatio Belbin was the last man who sat at his feet. At this time my friend would blaze into fury at ridicule of the old don, though nobody had spoken of him with more magnificent scorn in the days of his authority. This puzzled me very much. To ridicule Pecker had become a college custom. Freshmen scarcely felt themselves members of the place till they had cracked their early joke at his expense. It was a tradition that ages ago the Rev. Stanley Betel had been called the woodpecker, on account of a certain bird-like air and tricks of manner. Sometimes he darted at us his sharp nose and screwed-up eyes; in more emphatic mood he darted at us from the neighborhood of his right ear a forefinger and thumb lightly joined together; in moments of great excitement he darted at us altogether, long thin coat, sharp nose, little eyes, and finger and thumb, simulating a goose-beak.

Enough of description. Let it be sufficient to say that this respectable fossil had been disinterred by my friend and added to our reading party. I hoped, and even suggested, that Motherwell and the lad would raise some objections; but they (I can not wholly acquit them of servility) accepted the addition with an appearance of pleasure. The lad declared that Pecker would be rare fun; Motherwell bluntly observed (I remember that the joke struck me as clumsy and ill-timed) that if I thought the party too big, I could easily reduce it by one. Thus it happens that, as I on principle never oppose Michael, Mr. Betel was admitted to our cottage without a protest. Slowly, as we five dwelt together and pursued our studies, I became certain of the cause of my friend's action. No young don of the new school, however brilliant and however broad, was more than a match in breadth and brilliancy for Michael Horatio Belbin. For width of vision and knowledge of theories he stood almost alone. In minute details, on the other hand, in exact dates, in the precise force of particles, Michael Horatio was liable to err,

and with his accurate self-knowledge was of course well aware of his own weakness. In securing the companionship of Pecker, he had with his usual sagacity taken the very best means of strengthening himself where he was weakest. Mr. Betel is a lumber-room of unimportant facts, disconnected fragments, trifles which the bold generalizer has swept aside to the dust-heap. In that dusty twilight my friend groped daily, and every day acquired some morsel useful for his coming examinations. When I was sure of the reason of his action my mind was at rest. I could not bear the shadow of a doubt of Michael's practical wisdom.

So we five lived happily together till that fair autumn morning when I heard the news of Pecker's extraordinary audacity. It was an almost incredible instance of ingratitude to Michael, and I was not surprised at my friend's annoyance. Moreover, Mr. Betel's choice of a new companion was singularly unfortunate. I had observed long since that the society of George Effingham (we called him Gentle Geordie) was peculiarly irritating to Michael.

George and he had been friends from childhood. They had been schoolfellows, and had come up on the same day to the same college. Throughout their career at school and at the university, in every examination which the two had passed together, George Effingham had invariably beaten Michael Horatio Belbin. It is an astounding fact. Effingham was always first; Belbin was always second. It is a fact, and must be accepted as such. Of course I knew well enough that the gentle one's appearance of idleness and indifference was affected. I knew that he had worked in secret with wearing concentration. Again and again had I taken pleasure in noting his wearied eyes in the morning. I had made it my business more than once to smell out the midnight oil. Nevertheless, though this elegant and fop-like youth had worked like a horse, it seemed impossible that he should ever surpass the wonderful power of Michael, who delighted in the conflict, who told wonderful tales of his prodigious labors, his wrestling with ancient authors, his endless hours of vigil. And now this haughty spirit

which had been soothed by an atmosphere of affection and consideration, was to be chafed by the presence of this triumphant and indifferent rival. The peace essential for the labors of the fervid soul was to be changed into restlessness by a soft voice and quiet manner, and changed at a most critical time. Michael and Geordie were on the eve of taking their degrees. Both were certain to be in the first class. Both, as I at least knew very well, would compete for our vacant fellowship. Of course it was only too likely that Geordie would enjoy his usual luck, but whether he were fated to succeed or no, it was certain that his appearance at this time would be most prejudicial to Michael's work.

Whatever the degree of Michael's annoyance, he seemed on that day, whose dawning we had watched together, to have shaken it off with ease. He came back to breakfast flushed, hungry, and with his rebellious hair on end. He addressed Mr. Betel as usual, with a manner half respectful, half patronizing. He declared that the day was the most glorious of days. He proclaimed a holiday. The lad gave a shout

of gladness. Motherwell shook his fat sides; his expansive countenance beamed and his high-pitched laughter rippled musically as he looked inquiringly at Pecker. The Rev. Stanley Betel was quite ready. "A day of air and—well—exercise—well—will do us all good," he said, "yes—of exercise, in fact—and air;" and he pointed his sharp nose at each of us in turn, as if he would collect our votes.

Under the invigorating influence of Michael Horatio, this most peaceful of elderly dons had been rapidly acquiring an enthusiasm for air and exercise. He rushed about with his long coat open to the breeze and his coat-tails flying; he pushed out his little breast-bone, which resembled a half-starved pigeon's; he puckered his lips, rose on his toes, and drew in such breaths that we expected to see him borne upward and swept like a dragged rock among the lofty trees. Nay, I myself, happening to be in his neighborhood when he thought himself alone, had found him engaged in most mysterious rites. Standing as erect as his formation would allow, and without his long coat, he bore a strange resemblance to a well-

colored clay pipe erect on the smaller end. He stood opposite the glass, and followed with his eyes the upturned palm of his left hand, which at arm's length swung slowly backward till the good gentleman's nose was straight above his heels. In this position he resembled a crow about to prune his tail-feathers. Then the left hand returned and lay upon his breast-bone, while the right arm swung backward, followed by the earnest peering eyes. I stood amazed, and watched the alternate movement of those skinny arms, and the long nose turning above the high white collars. Here was a tremendous example of muscular Christianity. For this determined athlete to collect the votes of the party was, of course, a mere form. Moreover, Michael had spoken; and it was certain that they would all acquiesce in his whim.

"To-morrow," said Pecker, "Effingham will be here, and we must set to—well—work again; in fact—yes—to-morrow."

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow," cried Michael, looking up from his ham and eggs.

At the sound of Effingham's name I had glanced at my friend with inquiry in my eye. You would not have supposed that he was aware of my existence. He is a man of extraordinary character, of inexhaustible power.

CHAPTER III.

THAT shore, to which fate and the desire of knowledge had brought us, is a rare shore for walkers. Above the flat rocks, which are covered at high tide, is a low wall of loosely piled stones; within the wall is a strip of green more or less level, which a little further back rises steeply into green slope; and the slope is clothed above with trees, and the trees on the crest stand out against the sky. Here and there the long strip of level green is broken by a bold rock of old red sandstone, and here and there the slope has been hollowed into deep cool caves. On this exquisite morning of a day which, alas! was big with fate, the green turf, the red rocks, the trees above us now growing to new beauty of gold, ruddy or pale—all these beautiful things were aglow in the light of a warm fertile sun. The mists of dawn had melted away; and, save where in the shadow of some rock the grass was

sparkling and drenched with dew, we walked in full light and warmth. We were a strange procession. Belbin, dressed in a blue guernsey and flannel trousers rolled up to his knees, wore his coat on one shoulder, while on the other was one end of a pole, which swayed behind him as he strode along; the other end of this pole we supported in turn; slung upon it was the lordly hamper, which held towels and luncheon. In the pride of life and the heat of young imagination I fancied that Michael and I, when it was my turn to help him with the burden, were like Joshua and Caleb in a land of milk and honey.

Here let me pause a moment, that I may make a confession. If in the course of this little narrative I show myself clear-sighted as to the faults of others, let me at least enjoy the credit of not ignoring my own. Let me confess then that, as my appreciation of the beauties of nature verges on weakness, so also my wayward fancy too often leads me into superfluous comparisons. My imagination is the source of my weakness. I can guard against it when I am studying a human

being; but it runs away with me in the presence of natural phenomena, and it too often betrays me into picturesque simile and misleading metaphor. I know my faults, and I confess them. In this story, which I am bound to tell, I will do my best to preserve my descriptions of natural objects from those wearisome details which have a charm for me, and to avoid those fanciful comparisons which occur to me so frequently. After all, the resemblance of Joshua and Caleb to myself and my friend may be dismissed as superficial.

"It is great morning; come, away!" cried Michael more than once, and he leaped till the pole on my shoulder jumped painfully. The lad, all white flannel from head to heel, was busy slipping stones into Motherwell's capacious pocket. Motherwell, silent, possessed wholly by intense delight, was trying to force his unwieldy bulk to imitate the uncertain motions of the Rev. Stanley Betel.

The reverend gentleman was drifting along like a withered leaf; it seemed as if he were driven forward by the book in his coat-tail pocket, which was banging against his calves,

if calves they may be called. Truly we had seemed a strange party, had there been any one to see us. But save for a tramp or two, all that shore with its southern aspect was for us alone. The sun grew warmer and warmer; the air was fresh, but sweet and still; there was a bountiful quiet, a promise of plenty over all the land.

"Seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness," chanted Michael, and ever and anon he flung forth other fragments of that rich ode of Keats, seeming, as his habit is, careless whether there were fifty listeners or none.

So my comrades journeyed onward, glad of their strength, and of the bountiful morning, until they came where was a broad gap in the low rocks, and shelving sand ran down into the sea. There a fisherman's boat had been drawn clear of the brine, and the heavy oars lay in her. Then Michael shouted aloud like an Homeric warrior, tossed the pole from his shoulder, and leaped down the sand. "Aboard!" he cried, and laid hold of the boat. Pecker opened and shut his mouth, meditating exposition. Meanwhile the lad with the reckless

enthusiasm of his character sprang to the further side of the craft ; and Motherwell, after a nervous look at the sea, where was a ripple as on a girl's hair and no more, turned his broad back, and stern to stern made ready to heave portentously, while his expansive, ruddy face seemed to rival the countless laughings of ocean. Altogether they bent their strength and weight to the task. There was nobody in sight ; I too lent myself to this wild project. Even Pecker, catching the prevailing recklessness, attached himself to the boat. Another heave and she moved—moved with such suddenness that she brought our reverend companion to his knees. A little more, and she was in the shallow water ; boots and socks were thrown into her, and, barefoot all, we pushed her till she floated free. Then, as we were all in her and were getting out the oars, a shout came from the trees above the slope, and then a figure flying.

“Hullo ! hi ! you come back !” cried the boatman.

“Yes—well—yes, my good man,” piped the Rev. Betel ; “we will bring it back quite

safe—well—at once; in fact, yes, at once—almost.”

Michael rose in the stern of the boat, and flung ashore a sovereign; of which coin he has not too many specimens.

“We will return no more,” he chanted with portentous baritone; and the local mariner stood open-mouthed and staring on the shore.

Then Michael descending seized the stroke-oar, and Motherwell attached his monstrous weight to the other. I handed the rudder-lines to Pecker, who, peering earnestly ahead like a stage pilot, pulled them alternately: the boat's nose pointed now hither, now thither, but always out into the sunlight. The sun seemed twice as hot upon the sea, and the light was dazzling. Motherwell began to blow like a grampus, and presently let go his oar with his left hand that he might draw an arm across his brow.

“A bath before luncheon,” cried Michael.

Before we have time to consider the proposition, the lad is out of his clothes; he stands in the bows, in no hurry to take himself out of the warm sun: as he pauses tremulous on the edge,

Motherwell looks round upon us with a face full of intense but silent joy, draws his oar noiselessly aboard, lifts it, poises it, and lightly

flings the blade; there is a sound as of a flap-sail, or of hands clapped smartly, and the oar disappears into the water, and comes up uttering vengeance.

Next Motherwell, with frequent bursts of laughter, bares his majestic curves, goes in with a splash, and sets us rocking in the boat.

Michael leaps like a stag, and flashes far and wide over the water.

Mr Betel declines, with broken excuses, to go. I wonder how much of the Rev. Mr Betel is really coat.

I feel the sea with one foot, and finding it colder than I expected, slip in forthwith.

The water is quite warm; surely the Gulf Stream must take a turn hereabout. The sunlight sparkles on the rippling surface where my companions roll and play: the lad leaps on Motherwell's shoulders, and has his revenge; Michael with imperial partiality ducks them both. I remain near the boat an amused spectator. There is endless laughter and

splashing. The Rev. Stanley Betel prostrates himself in his efforts to strike our playful friends with the oar; he has grown as playful as they; I don't think that he was ever young till now.

When we were dry and dressed, and in turn had rowed ourselves into a glow, we fell upon the food; and lying motionless on that bright watery floor, feasted like kings. And when we had made an end of eating and drinking, we were motionless, basking like lizards in the sun. Perhaps Motherwell was more like a turtle, as he lay on his comfortable back, placidly regarding the blue vault of heaven. The air was full of soft wooing. As I looked round on my companions, a society of reading men formed for the acquisition of knowledge, I could see that every one of them—even Pecker himself—had almost reached that beatific state in which man is, and thinks not. Like ruminating kine, they were content and torpid. I alone kept my wits about me. One can learn so much when people are off their guard.

Of course, Michael was the first to rebel

against repose. He raised his tumbled head, shook himself, shouted, and laid hold of an oar. The lad awoke at the shout, and sat up, rubbing his eyes, in the bottom of the boat. Then Motherwell arose from his profound contemplation of the void. I arranged the strings in which our reverend friend had hopelessly involved himself. So we started shoreward, silent and yawning. Was that silence ominous of evil to come?

As we drew near to that narrow sandy bay, whence we had stolen our gallant bark, we became aware of more people than one upon the beach. There was the boatman, who was the richer by Michael's sovereign, but he was no longer alone. A tribe of little girls were with him—of little girls all dressed alike in scarlet cloaks, and with hats of rough straw tied over their ears with dark blue ribbons; and with the tribe was a young woman in command. I can hardly write of her with patience. She was tall and strong, lithe and fair, and a mass of light hair was tied loosely at the back of her long neck. So much we could see as we drew near. I don't know why it was obvious that

she belonged to a higher stratum of society than the children. She wore a blue guernsey, no better than Michael's, a short skirt of some strong stuff, and stout shoes. I suppose that it was some trick of the head, or the manner of her looking at us, which made us aware that this was what is called a lady. Her manner of looking at us may be briefly described: she regarded us as if we were dirt. An awful presentiment fell upon us. Michael muttered something inaudible between his teeth, and rowed with redoubled vigor; Motherwell whistled, with a countenance most woebegone, and answered Michael's spurt. In a few moments the boat was driven through the shallow water, and up into dry sand. Then we scrambled out. The young lady stepped down to meet us, and addressed herself with a perfect air of politeness to Pecker.

"May I ask," she said, "why you took away my boat?"

Her boat!

Pecker seemed to fall together like a card house; he opened his mouth to speak, but no sound came.

"It was unfortunate," she said, "because I had promised the little girls of my Orphanage to take them for a row."

Here Michael, who alone seemed capable of speech, cried out and asked if it was too late, and if we might not be allowed to row the little girls.

She hardly looked at him as she answered that she was much obliged, but that it was impossible now.

"Can't I do any thing?" cried Michael, who was chafing under a sense of humiliation. "Of course we had no idea that the boat was yours; we thought it belonged to this man here, and that we could pay for its use; it is most unlucky."

To this speech the young lady paid no attention whatever. She was looking with a puzzled expression at Pecker, who was twisting himself strangely in his efforts to arrange a few sentences of apology.

"Surely," she said, with a complete change of manner, "surely I can't be mistaken. You are Mr. Stanley Betel? I am sure you are."

"Yes, yes—in fact—certainly, of course—yes," answered Pecker.

"Oh, my father will be so glad to see you!" she said, shaking his hand vigorously, while her face beamed with a smile. She seemed a different creature when she smiled; and we all stared in amazement. "He will be so pleased," she repeated. "My father is General Falconhurst; that is our house up there, above the trees."

"Harold Falconhurst," said the old don to himself; and I detected a faint flush on his dry old cheek. "Yes; your father was a—well—very great friend of mine," he said, darting forward toward the young lady.

"Come up and see him," she said cordially.

He darted back again, and looked to us for help.

"I am afraid we have a—well—friend," he began; "that is, a friend—yes, a friend joins our—well—party, to-day; I am afraid he is waiting for us now—in fact—George Effingham—I am afraid he is—well—waiting for us already—well."

The little gentleman was apparently con-

fused, and the girl—for she was no more than a girl—looked at him with a kindly superiority. “To-morrow, then,” she said; “you must promise to come to-morrow. Come to luncheon at two. And I am sure”—here she seemed to become aware of our existence—“my father will be delighted if you will bring any of your pupils.”

This was indeed condescension.

I happened to be looking at Michael, and I saw him start at the words “pupils” as at the flick of a whip.

This lady’s manner seemed to place us on a level with her tribe of little girls with grins and red cloaks. These children were not country-born, nor offspring of fisher-folks, but orphans brought young from London to be reared in country air. From the shrewdness of the eyes in their sharp little faces, I should have fancied that they read us like a book, and enjoyed our discomfiture. I am always embarrassed by children. One can never tell how much they perceive. Their instinct defies calculation. Strangely enough, I can never persuade them to make friends with me. I don’t like children.

Pecker darting forward with cordiality, and backward with shyness, finally succeeded in accepting the invitation for the next day ; and Miss Falconhurst shook him again by the hand as she thanked him. Her little flock and his little flock stood and stared at each other. In the eyes of those London orphans I discerned a supernatural penetration. Michael was the first to free himself from the spell. He raised his hat to the lady, who was now half-way up the slope, swung round, and marched off in silence. Motherwell and the lad (the lad certainly did look unjustifiably young) shouldered the pole and the basket. We went home with solemnity and long strides.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning we were all at work, and all very solemn. That double portion of gloom, which is apt to follow a holiday, was on the party. Moreover George Effingham had arrived. He was reclining on the sofa, with a history of philosophy in his hand; he had the air of dallying with the lightest work of fiction. It is the fashion to talk of Gentle Geordie's charm, of his sweet temper, his modesty, his unselfishness. I see little beneath his affectation; and, as I have said before, his presence acts as a lively irritant to Michael Horatio Belbin. I fancy that a presentiment hung over us all. Even Motherwell wore that harassed look which is caused in him by the thought of examinations; he rubbed his face till it glowed like a furnace, and twisted the lock of hair above his forehead till it stood straight on end like a magnetized corkscrew. The lad's eyes were

wandering; I suspected him of counting the dead leaves which, fluttering and pausing in the still air, fell one by one along the window-pane. I could not but notice the tricks of my fellows, for it has become a habit with me, but for the most part my attention was fixed on Michael. He had said nothing more to me about Geordie. He seemed absorbed in his work. His elbows were as firmly planted on the table as his feet on the floor; his head was held tight between his fists; his eyes were fixed unwinking on his book.

Now, as the morning hours slipped away, I could see that Pecker grew more and more nervous. He hopped on his chair; he noiselessly got up to peer at the clock; he tapped the barometer with his skinny little claw. At last, when he had regarded us all in turn many times, and had opened and shut his mouth as often, he rushed into the question:

“Which of you are coming with me?”

We all looked up; and Motherwell, glad of an interruption, shoved all his front hair straight on end with one gigantic hand, rolled on his seat, and favored us with his silvery laughter.

"Not one of us dares go with you," he said, and laughed again.

I was looking at Michael, and I saw him start at the word "dares."

"I shall go," he said briefly.

Motherwell opened his eyes wide, and whistled.

"Do you mean to go?" asked Michael of me across the table.

I jumped at the invitation. In truth, I was eager to go, though I had been unwilling to make myself conspicuous by volunteering. I was determined to study Miss Falconhurst. She had such an air of power, that I could not rest till I had stalked her weakness. She interested me, though I did not like her. I longed to analyze the littleness of this grand-seeming lady.

"Three are enough, if not too many," said Michael.

The lad's face fell; he had, as usual, caught the infection.

"I need a day of complete repose," said Geordie, smiling lazily upon us from the sofa; "give her my love, and to Mr. the General, her father. Adieu."

We were made welcome at the castle with the utmost friendliness. It is a strange pile of building, and I took pleasure in noting its peculiarities. It was once no more than a little fort built high above the sea for the sake of an outlook, a watch-tower whence the rude vessels of primitive marauders were descried. To this tower rooms have been added at different dates; till at last it was lengthened westward in the form of a French château, with high slate roof. This strange pile, with the ancient fort still standing at its east end, stretches low and long on the top of the slope. Before it the wide terrace is all day full of sun; and up to its low parapet thick trees climb the steep slope from the shore below. At the western end of the house the terrace stretches backward, with smooth turf; and a steep bank and dense mass of yew shelter the warm green from the north. The whole place with its glorious sea view has, I must confess, an extraordinary charm. To this pleasant dwelling we were cordially welcomed by its owner. The General had a high color and pale blue eyes, a

figure now rather stiff, but slim as a boy's. Even in the loose gray clothes, which he wore as landed proprietor, he had a distinctly military air. He talked a great deal, and smiled when he was not talking. He asked numberless questions of our reverend friend. He was full of disorganized information on all sorts of subjects, and was childishly eager to increase his store. Any body could read him like an open book—his satisfaction with the world and with himself, his information, his possessions, and above all his daughter. Indeed, the young lady had a most charming air with him. She seemed to take charge of him with a constant apology for so doing. She waited on him and his old friend at luncheon, and pretended great delight in their anecdotes of former days. Of Michael and myself she took as little notice as was consistent with politeness. She seemed to consider us, so far as she considered us at all, as unimportant appendages of Pecker—two little boys at his coat-tails. That she should really so consider Michael Horatio Belbin was impossible. I was not deceived for a moment. For all her frank air, I was sure

that she calculated the effect of her free attitudes as she hovered over the two elderly gentlemen, of the turn of the long white throat as she listened to their stories. I felt that she challenged our admiration, or at least that of my friend. Her indifference to me was possibly genuine. Possibly she was as wholly unaware of my presence as she seemed, until I had studied her with perhaps too great persistence, when at last she slowly turned her head in my direction, and looked on me as if she looked on vacancy. I dropped my eyes in some confusion. She certainly looked imperial. She might have posed for a young Artemis. I felt a strange dread of her power, even while I was analyzing her weakness.

After luncheon the General carried off his old friend, that he might show him all the ingenious dodges which he had introduced into his houses and gardens; and doubtless also that he might pump him undisturbed. Miss Falconhurst remained with us on the terrace above the sea. She could no longer pretend to ignore us, nor did she try. On the contrary, she passed with one step from a manner of the

most chilling indifference to one as frank and friendly as if she had known us for years. I could see that this abrupt transition astonished Michael; it was almost conceivable that she would chaff him before they parted. She was standing in a grand negligent attitude, and pointing out the various objects which could be seen on the coast between us and the little fishing village which was far away below us on the right, when Michael broke in with a question.

"Are you any relation," he asked, "to the Captain Falconhurst who went back under fire to fetch the little drummer?"

"That was my father!" and she turned to him with a great flush flooding her face and neck, and her eyes shining. It must be confessed that she looked superbly handsome.

Michael, obedient to one of his fine impulses, pulled his hat off, and stood bareheaded.

"It's worth while living to do a thing like that," he said after a pause.

She looked at him, laughing a little, but critical withal.

"It is not given to every man to be a hero like my father."

"We have no chance," cried Belbin hotly.

"You young gentlemen at college must mind your books."

Michael chose not to hear this remark. He rushed off on a familiar track. He inveighed against the enervating influence of our modern England, occupations cut and dried, progress on safe smooth roads, life in clover—in cotton wool—in glass houses. When he stopped he was still staring far away to sea, and I knew that he was hot with his old longing for adventure.

"And do you think you would really like danger?"

She looked at him with a sidelong glance under her drooped eyelids. There was something in her look or tone which hinted doubt, and set his pride ablaze.

"Why not I as well as another?" he cried hotly.

There was a passionate ring in his voice. I looked at him with amazement. I knew the force of his passion; but I knew also his power of controlling that force. It was impossible that he was to be shaken from his self-control

by a girl. I thought that I was sure of his judgment, of his good sense. Yet he was strangely moved. She had stung him with her hints.

"I am not utterly a coward," he went on, with growing heat; "even in these days—even here—even a civilian may show himself a man. It was only last year——"

He stopped abruptly.

"Last year!" she repeated, with an appearance of lively interest; "what happened last year?"

"Oh, I saved a girl's life: that's all."

She laughed with low sweet laughter. "That's all," she said, echoing his words; then she added, "How did it happen? Do tell me."

I could not believe that my wise friend was deceived by her arts. I cast about in my mind for his motive in allowing himself to be drawn out. He told her how he had stopped a young lady's runaway ponies in London. From this story he was cunningly led to other adventures of himself and of his friends. He seemed to abandon himself to mere delight in past heroic deeds, as if he spoke to a hearer sympathetic

as Desdemona. He spoke with enthusiasm, and he never spoke better. Nor were his looks less heroic than his speech. The wide brow, above which the hair was tumultuous as usual, was turned square to the sea; the brown eyes were full of fire; the wide nostrils seemed to long for the brine; the firm and rather prominent lips were parted with quick words. Standing straight as a wand, with his firm chin upraised, and a flush on his clear sallow skin, he looked fit to conquer the world.

“ I am ashamed

To look upon the holy sun, to have

The benefit of his bless'd beams, remaining

So long a poor unknown.”

As he spoke the lines he seemed to have forgotten the girl's presence. She was looking at him with arched brows and evident curiosity. To a superficial observer they would have made a great picture of simple heroic man and maid. I sometimes wonder if superior insight be an unmixed blessing.

“ What's that? what's that? ” cried the General, bustling up with his thirst for information. “ You were quoting poetry, eh? ”

The young people turned at the sound of his voice, and both started to find me at their elbow. It seemed that they had entirely forgotten my presence.

"What are you doing here?" asked Michael, with his quaint rough manner.

"Nothing," I answered.

He turned away to say "Good-by" to the General, who was most pressing in his invitations to us to come again.

"To-morrow," he said; "every day; all of you, all your party; we need enlivening, my girl and I. I rely on you, Stanley; you must come and bring all your party."

On the way home I ventured to congratulate Michael Horatio on his eloquence. He snorted like a war horse. "Oh, that's what you like, is it? I bragged like a fool."

CHAPTER V.

AND now was the complexion of our reading party changed. Heretofore we had prided ourselves on combining the acquisition of knowledge with a life robust, barbaric, free. We had got our heads out of the collar, and forgotten the feeling of starch. Pilot-coats and woolen guernseys, flannel trowsers and patched breeches, stalking caps, sombreros, sou'-westers—such were the coverings in which my comrades had taken delight. I shall never forget the appearance of the Rev. Stanley Betel as he went forth one day in Motherwell's gigantic fishing-boots. And yet Pecker had looked upon us sometimes with a strangely puzzled expression, as if he had waked to find himself mate of a gang of smugglers or captain of poachers; he had regarded us as a hen at the pond's verge regards the ducklings of her hatching. Such had been the effect on cultured youth of sea air and a wild coast. Now all

was changed. Michael and I had donned linen for our first visit to the Falconhursts; and since that event shirts with collars became the rule among us. Of course we did not rush at once into our most elegant clothes. In the first place, acquaintance with a lady of the neighborhood made necessary a few modifications of costume. Then quickly growing came thought of the picturesque, invading, modifying, adorning our roughness. We were rough, but rough like tame bears—with hair combed and ribbons round the necks. We were beasts with Beauty in the neighborhood. Motherwell's flannels went to the wash, and returned a little tight but of an unusual whiteness. At about the same time he became very unwilling to sing those humorous ditties for which we were wont to call after dinner; while, on the other hand, he was always found warbling to himself scraps of sentimental song; trying things, as he would say with a high nervous laugh, at the jingling piano, while the music-stool groaned beneath him. The lad, save for a certain demureness, which appeared in the presence of Miss Falconhurst, and of which he had been previously

held incapable, was unchanged. George Effingham was always well dressed, though he pretended to think only of comfort. It was a time of change; but the novelty which was most important in my eyes was the appearance on Michael of a loose neckerchief, of which the color was subdued crimson. In men like Michael Horatio Belbin even trifles like these have a meaning. They never escape me. The color was most becoming to him. Its appearance was the one touch which completed my certainty of his intentions. I was now sure that he desired to make himself agreeable to Miss Falconhurst. Since our first visit to the castle Michael had been there daily. Indeed, this is true of most of us. The General's hospitality grew more and more pressing; and we responded heartily to his pressure. We were all quite at home in his house. We played many games of tennis. Some shot our host's rabbits, others rode his horses. We took the grave young orphans out to sea; we listened to their hymns; we treated them to buns; we no longer quailed before their solemn glances. Day after day I was in the society of Miss

Falconhurst ; and day after day I watched Michael Horatio Belbin. Nor did I confine myself to observation. I found means to draw from Pecker, without undue appearance of eagerness, a good deal of information about the Falconhursts. The General had not long since inherited this property ; it was a good property, and not entailed ; Miss Falconhurst was the General's only child. Now, I had always held that no man estimated money more justly than Michael—that while, on the one hand, he had no greed, on the other he knew well that money is a necessary part of a great career. He had always intended to have a great career ; we all expected it of him. When I had convinced myself (and, indeed, I thought from the first that I could trust my knowledge of my friend so far) that Michael was not led away by mere fancy for a handsome head and a royal air, I breathed again. I could not bear that my idol should for a moment totter on his pedestal. When I was reassured I could look on that game with a tranquil spirit. Ah ! what pleasure is there to equal the quiet observation of one's neighbors ?

I ask little from society, from the world. Let other and stronger men fight the great battle of life ; I do not demand the contest. I am content to be left at peace, an humble watcher, an observer unobserved.

Now, though my friend's conduct had, as I thought, become wholly intelligible to me, that of Miss Falconhurst still puzzled me. I had the key to his action, but not to her caprice. It seemed to me that she demanded a whole bunch of keys. She was astoundingly frank with us all, and yet for all her frankness she never ceased to suggest to me a real self in reserve. Daily with us was the cheerful companion, frank as a boy and yet charmingly feminine ; every day I was more certain that this character was played to us as to an audience ; that we, or some of us (for I can't say that she valued the opinion of all), were to be influenced by the representation ; that she was playing a game. What game was she playing ? I spared no pains to discover ; I gave myself to the minutest observations ; I lay in wait to surprise her in an unguarded moment. The study of her nature became a passion ; I began to feel

that my happiness depended on finding her out.

Miss Falconhurst, though she occupied so great a share of my thoughts, nevertheless managed to preserve toward me an air of sublime indifference. She seemed wholly careless of my observation, and indeed for the most part of my existence. She was polite to me and no more. And one of the puzzling facts about this lady at this time was that she seemed a different person to each one of us. Not only did the wily woman, whom I detected within her, differ from our frank pleasant comrade as darkness from light; but this charming comrade herself had a peculiar charm for each of my fellows. She seemed outspoken, simple, honest, while with consummate art she adapted herself to each, and won them all. With Mr. Betel she was like a humorous daughter, a child full of little attentions, and loving the peculiarities at which she laughed openly, as if she could not help it. She laughed at Motherwell too, especially when he was in the sentimental vein, as he often was at this time. He was apt to sigh about the sea or the color of the autumn trees,

and to make general observations about beauty interrupted by little high-pitched coughs; he smiled almost as much as usual, but pensively, and he sang with a tenor, which was wonderfully small for his bulk, little songs about loyalty to ladies, and comfort in dreams and such things. It required no great penetration to see that Motherwell had been made a fool of by Honoria Falconhurst. She used to look at him sideways, when he sighed, and turn down the corners of her mouth; then she would probably summon the lad and go away to the stables or the tennis-ground. The lad followed her like a dog, and when she did not notice him, as was generally the case, he would stand and stare at her with big eyes. I think that it was slowly dawning on him that there were women in the world. He said nothing, or very little, but he attended the lady's steps; he was eager to fetch or carry; instead of laughing all day he only laughed when she laughed; he was lost in amazement.

In conversation with Michael Miss Falconhurst was more grave; though she treated even him with so much ease and apparent lightness

of heart, that she would have seemed to the casual observer to see no more in him than in any other young man. Luckily, I am never a casual observer. Though she jested and laughed, she was careful to show interest in his thoughts, and a desire to share his knowledge. She asked almost as many questions as her father; and laughingly expressed indignant surprise that he knew more than she of the rocks, and birds, and flowers of her own coast. For indeed Michael is inexhaustible, and is as much at home in the field as in the library. Moreover, no man can talk so well when, as in this case, he has good reasons for talking well. Thus it happened that he and Miss Falconhurst were often together. When their talk was very earnest we others generally kept our distance; the lad would stare from afar as if he awaited a summons; Motherwell would become restless, and roll himself about and sigh. I sometimes managed to approach the talkers without exciting their observation, for luckily neither of them appeared to notice me much. I found that the young lady very often brought the conversation back to their

first subject. She seemed greedy of deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice. There could be no more delicate flattery of Michael, whose mind was stored with tales of daring more or less true. His voice would tremble as he spoke of the Elizabethan sailors, who after all must have been very wild and rough, and little better than pirates; then she would call into her face an expression of the keenest sympathy; I have seen more than once the tears stand in her eyes. So wonderful are the arts of women! He lent her books, too, and she led him through her father's library asking advice about her reading, and with a pretty air of defiance bringing her favorite romances up for judgment. So they read together, and talked together, and together rode or walked by the sea. All looked well. It looked as if Michael Horatio Belbin would win this lady, and win with her a great start in life. And yet I dared not be sure. I knew that I had not plumbed the depths of this exasperating character. This girl in her brave beauty (and her beauty is wonderful at times—a mighty power) was still mysterious to me. She went forth from a

secret chamber, armed for conquest, with woven spells for Michael. But did she care for him? The problem perplexed me to the verge of distraction. I watched and listened, but the question remained unanswered.

CHAPTER VI.

HONORIA FALCONHURST puzzled and perplexed me as nobody had ever before puzzled and perplexed me. I have always found it harder to understand women than men. I have often mentally constructed a man from a single trait which has come under my observation; and subsequent experience has shown me that my constructed creature corresponded with the real being. I early learned that in the case of a woman this bold method is useless. If I have observed a quality in her, who can assure me that it has a right to be her quality—that it is not wholly inconsistent with her character? She may be a bundle of discordant attributes, and yet herself sublimely unconscious of her illogical state—of her impossibility. She may be wholly pleased with herself, though she have no more right to be than a close combination of centrifugal forces. It is this which makes

woman eternally interesting to man. She is a riddle which it is impossible to give up. All women are hard to read, and of all women Miss Falconhurst was the hardest. Whenever I could free my mind even for a moment from the eager investigation of her feeling for my friend Michael, there was another question waiting for me—another question which I could not answer. What was the secret cause of her strange treatment of George Effingham?

During the first days of his visit to us, Gentle Geordie had declined with his usual air of laziness to go to the castle or to know its inmates. At first he said, as he generally said, that it was too much trouble; he maintained languidly that his constitution required complete repose after his journey. When he had reposed for eight-and-forty hours he passed easily to a new excuse. He complained that he was already tired to death of both the General and his daughter. He laughed at the picture of General Falconhurst, with military decision and cheerful aspect, cross-questioning the Rev. Stanley

Betel about the merits of the Latin Grammar now in use at Oxford. He sighed over the soldier's passion for useless information; as if, forsooth, useful information were not fatiguing enough. He sighed yet more over the General's daughter, whom he pronounced a hoyden, much too familiar in manner—in short, uncomfortably modern. But it was the tale of heroism—of the rescue of the drummer-boy by the gallant young officer—which Effingham treated with the greatest show of disrespect. He even caricatured the incident, drawing the young Falconhurst with the drum very big under one arm, and the boy very small under the other, hero and guardsman with his bearskin knocked over his nose, and the child's drum-sticks in his mouth. He argued with a show of gravity against the wisdom of the act, saying that there were by far too many boys about, and that for his part he hated drums. Of course there were champions enough to break lances in defense of our neighbors; but I observed that Michael said nothing, and, save for a certain grimness in his face, might have been held not

to hear the flippant remarks of our gentle companion.

For a full week George Effingham declined to accompany us on our daily walk. He smiled on our start; said that he asked nothing but to be let alone—to be left on the sofa and to the labors necessary for his schools. At the end of a week he arose and stretched himself.

“I find,” he said, smiling sweetly, “that I am not quite good enough for the hermit’s life. As you fellows keep all your conversation for the people on the hill, I must go thither too, or consent to forego the voice of man.”

We thought that this was intended for a jest, for we had long ceased to urge him to accompany us; but when we climbed to the terrace on the afternoon of that day we found him in close conversation with General Falconhurst. The General held him by the button, and Gentle Geordie, with amiable nods and brief speeches, was confirming his new acquaintance in all his false ideas of University life. It was annoying to some of

us to find that Geordie immediately became the General's favorite. He smiled pleasantly when the elderly gentleman talked; it was never any trouble to him to smile. As usual, he smiled himself into favor.

But though George Effingham with his usual luck delighted the father, his smiling and his soft, lazy speech seemed to produce a precisely opposite effect in the daughter. Miss Falconhurst had the air of being irritated by the very first word which George Effingham spoke in her presence. She was talking to Michael at the moment. At the sound of the unknown voice she stopped short, and looked at the stranger with a curious sidelong look. There was something which seemed almost aversion in her glance. So far as I could judge, Geordie irritated her, as he often irritated Michael, by his assumption of indifference and ease. But Michael and Miss Falconhurst showed their irritation in very different ways. When my friend was annoyed by Effingham, I inferred his annoyance from his silence. Miss Falconhurst, on the contrary, was stung to speech, and eager to sting

in return. Before their acquaintance was an hour old she had begun to throw darts at Geordie. Each time they met, the darts were sharper and more frequent. She seemed bent on rousing him from his invincible good temper. It was well-nigh impossible. The more energetic her attack, the more languid his defense. He surrendered every position with a light heart; and with a light heart he reoccupied them all when the engagement was over. The sharper her tongue, the more pleasure appeared in his smile. He seemed to take a gentle interest in his own wounds, in wondering when the next dart was coming, and where it would strike him. So were all his powers concentrated into pure exasperation. Every day he carried to her home a small offering of sentiments which were calculated to annoy the lady. He not only shaped his speech, but also his life, to the same good end. He delighted to come lounging in the character which would most surely irritate her. He discovered at once her love of heroism and self-sacrifice; therefore he plumed himself ostentatiously on selfishness

and cowardice. He would do nothing but sit in the sun, when it was warm enough on the terrace, or by the fire when the mists crept up from the sea. He refused a mount on the ground that he was afraid of horses; he said that his nerves could not bear the sound of a gun; he lisped forth his opinion, that it was too much trouble to play games. Now, none of these reasons were true, as I very well knew. They are reasons which I might have urged in my own case, with far more truth; since I confess that I join in the sports and pastimes of young men less from any natural inclination than from a strong desire to be with the young men themselves—to see what they are doing, to find out what they are thinking. But George Effingham is not like me. He is a very pretty horseman, and was one of the best tennis-players in our time at Oxford. Indeed, he is one of those men who do most things well, and with the crowning grace of apparent ease. He seems to sit well on a horse, because it would be an effort to him to sit otherwise; to place a ball in the right place, because his

racquet so willed it, and he would not balk his racquet. In short, there seemed to be but one true reason for Gentle Geordie's conduct at the castle—the desire to irritate Honoria Falconhurst. He was very polite in manner, always sweet-tempered as a cherub; and when he begged that his attendance might be excused, he would plead with a childlike look the meanest motives. It was too much trouble; or he was frightened; or he didn't see what good *he* could get out of it. Such were his excuses, and so the young lady was moved to looks of scorn and to hasty speech. She shot arrows into him, whereat he smiled as if tickled; she threw caps in his way, which, though to her eye they fitted him to a nicety, he would by no means wear. It was a very pretty game for the spectators; and yet I could see that it afforded no pleasure to Michael Horatio Belbin.

CHAPTER VII.

BY degrees we had been lulled into a pleasant belief that on that coast autumn was always fair. Day followed day in beauty. Every morning the white mist lay close on sea and shore; every evening the soft haze grew dense again to mist, and the rich grass was drenched with dew; but all the midday hours between mist and mist were bright and warm with sun, and the sunlit air was still. The leaves were yet thick on inland copse and thicket, and on trees that crowned the grassy sea-banks; but the beeches were showing a richer and deeper red, and the pale gold of slim birches grew brighter about the silver steps.

How happy am I that I am not too great to be delighted by little things, that for me Nature renews again and again her endless enchantments, and never appeals to me in vain! This wonderful autumn will be for me a lifelong possession, "a joy forever." Even

my companions were not insensible to the extraordinary charm. Each in his degree is capable of feeling. All seemed to have forgotten that English weather is changeable.

Of course a change came. One morning, as we sat over our books, I observed that most of us were idle, and some of us irritable. At last Motherwell, who had been twisting his handkerchief, shoving his hair round and round his head with a large hand, fidgeting and yawning, burst out into abuse of the heat. Our room was small, and the sun stared sullenly in at the window.

"I am going out," said Michael; and he rose to put away his work.

Mr. Betel looked up to expostulate, and saw that we were all putting away our books. "I confess," he said, "well—that there is a—well—something oppressive, in fact, electrical in the day."

We were quite willing to accept electricity as an excuse for leisure.

Out of doors the air was but little fresher. Even the lad was in a measure subdued. But the strangest phenomenon was to be observed

in Effingham. I had not seen a single smile on the face of Gentle Geordie since we met that morning. He said very little; there was even a faint crease between his eyebrows. If I had ever known him ill, even in the least degree, I should have guessed that he had a headache. Nobody suggested that we should go up to the castle, perhaps because it was too early, perhaps because it was easier to remain on level ground; it was certainly easier to offer no suggestion. There was a peculiar silence about us; to break it required an effort; in it was safety: in the most commonplace speech there was possible offense and quarrel. Sea and shore looked different to our eyes. We could see much further across the water, for there was no haze on its surface; but the clearer air was far less pleasant. So we marched on in silence till we came to that small sandy cove where we had first beheld Honoria Falconhurst, terrible as an avenging Artemis with her little orphan nymphs about her feet. This little bay is one of the very few places on that coast where a boat can be beached. The flat rocks, which are bare at low tide, lie in unbroken line between that bay

and the point, which further to the west runs out into the sea. Beyond the point is the little harbor, and the village full of fisher-folks, among whom Miss Falconhurst loved to play the Lady Bountiful.

When we came in sight of the well-known sandy cove, we saw that the boat was not there; we turned seaward to look for her: there she was on the water; she was being driven toward us by a pair of strong sculls, and impatient, high on the bows, was Honoria Falconhurst once more. Truly Fortune was very kind to this young lady; by happy accident she was again and again found in a magnificent attitude. I stared at her open-mouthed, and so doubtless did the others. The onward motion of the boat stirred the sluggish air; the girl's clear pale cheek was flushed; she seemed to bring life with her; she looked a goddess—a goddess riding shoreward with blown hair. I was enchanted by the picture. As I gazed, I heard a deep breath at my elbow; looking out of the corner of my eye I took note of George Effingham's face; there was no smile on it, and the line had deepened between his brows.

On came the boat and ran into shallow water; the boatman shipped his sculls; the girl leaped ashore with a laugh. She seemed full of excitement; and as if the sight of our dullness stung her anew, she gave the rein to her excitement with a sudden defiance. She was audacious, almost reckless, full of talk. She rushed into an explanation of her rough dress and loose locks. She had been to the village to see a poor fellow whose arm had been broken; he was young Robin, son of old Robin; old Robin had come to fetch her; she had made old Robin row her there and back in her boat; she was glad to get out of the house, which had been stifling all the morning; and young Robin was so glad to see her, and he had been so badly hurt, and he was so brave. "Ah, it is great to see his patience!" she cried; "night after night he dares death as a matter of course, and thinks nothing of it; and now he doesn't think of his pain, but only about getting out again to work for his wife and his little baby; and he is as quiet and patient as man can be, just that he may go out and risk his life again."

"I suppose that they are not in danger every night," said Effingham slowly.

"Oh, you needn't believe in the danger," she said sharply; "of course you wouldn't; it's easy not to believe: ask old Robin here; he'll tell you if this coast is dangerous; and young Robin isn't a bit better than the others, is he, old Robin? They are all brave and simple, and——"

When she stopped for breath, Gentle Geordie, who seemed to me to make an effort to recover his lazy mocking manner, said shortly, "A whole village of heroes!"

She was very angry. She was herself. She showed the bad temper which I had suspected. "And why not?" she cried; "there are still men in the world, though you may not know it, Mr. Effingham."

He bowed and smiled, but, I thought, with an effort. Michael, who had stood by silent, turned on his heel, and I heard him grind an oath between his teeth.

Perhaps Mr. Stanley Betel was right, and the air was full of electricity. Miss Falconhurst turned from Geordie to her old friend and hench-

man. "Of course you go out to-night, Robin?" she said, with her most imperial air.

The old man looked to each point of the compass, with one eye screwed up in a knowing manner; then he regarded each of us in turn with the same expression; finally he allowed his gaze to rest upon the young lady.

"I'm thinking it 'll be a 'coarse night," he said.

"But you will go," she cried impatiently; "you always go, always."

"I can not say that, Miss Falconhurst," said old Robin, regarding her with his clear shrewd eye.

"But you will go to-night; here is a fine gentleman come to laugh at us; he thinks we are afraid, Robin. You must promise me to go out to-night; promise me, whatever the weather."

"I am no saying I won't go."

Miss Falconhurst seemed to accept this speech as satisfactory. I know nothing of dialects and but little of fishermen; but there was something about old Robin which convinced me that he was a north countryman both by birth and breeding.

"Perhaps, if you go, you will take me with you," said George Effingham, with his most lazy manner.

We all laughed, though not very heartily; it seemed an ill-timed joke. It certainly failed to amuse Miss Falconhurst; she turned angrily away.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the fair Honoria had gone away homeward, we debated if we should follow her. Motherwell thought that the General would be disappointed if a whole day passed without a talk with Mr. Betel: he said that if Mr. Betel would go, he did not mind going with him. Pecker was inclined to agree with Motherwell. I looked for Michael, and saw him striding up the path which leads to the castle. I decided to go.

Geordie, with a light laugh, said that he thought he would give the Falconhursts a holiday. "Good-by," he added, "and take great care of yourselves; don't be persuaded to do anything rash." He waved his hand to us with that grace which he generally affected, and sauntered away along the shore.

That afternoon Miss Falconhurst was unusually agreeable. I fancied that she was somewhat ashamed of having betrayed herself,

and was taking pains to erase the impression. She insisted on tennis till she had roused us from our lethargy; she instructed the lad in a variety of ingenious knots; she filled the capacious Motherwell with delight by ordering him to try duets with her; she was almost deferential to Michael, who was still somewhat glum. Finally, when her father pressed us to dine with him, she seconded the invitation with a most agreeable air of friendliness. Something was said of Geordie's loneliness, but we decided that he liked to be alone sometimes; we accepted the invitation.

Meanwhile it had become evident that old Robin was no false prophet. The night promised to be coarse indeed. The sun set fiercely red among broken clouds, and out of the wild west the wind began to blow. As we dined we heard it in the pauses of our talk and laughter, moaning round the old wall, and now and again the dead flying leaves pattered on the window. We staid rather late in the warm, pleasant rooms; and when we were ready to go we found that a gale was blowing. When the Rev. Stanley Betel, with

excessive daring, ventured to open the big hall door, he was blown backward and caught in the strong arms of Michael. It taxed all our strength to close the door behind us, and no little care and skill to keep the narrow path. The lad sent wild cries into the darkness; Motherwell, whom music and dinner and tender thoughts had borne to the very height of geniality, laughed high as he was hustled along by the blast; Michael gave his arm to Pecker, and I followed.

When we were near our home we saw that there was no light burning. "Ho, ho! the lazy one has gone to bed," cried Motherwell, running like a collier's tub before the breeze.

"Do you think I might go and hustle Geordie?" asked the lad, shouting the question into Michael's ear.

"No; let him alone," said Michael; "he is not in the mood."

So we opened and closed our door as quietly as the gale would allow, and quietly went to our beds. I could not sleep. The wind came whistling round the corner close to my head,

rattled the window with handfuls of dry leaves, grumbled in the chimney, shrieked in the keyhole. If I dozed for a few minutes, I awoke with a start. If I believed in such things I should say that I was under the influence of a presentiment. Fortunately no man is so wholly free from superstition as myself. And yet I confess that I felt no surprise when I leaped up wide awake with Miss Falconhurst's voice in my ear. She was speaking in the passage, and, mixed with the riot of the gale, I could distinguish the passionate pain in her tone. Presently I heard Michael speaking in answer.

"Hush!" he said, "don't wake the others; they'll be no good; we must get some men from the village."

Meanwhile I had noiselessly got into my clothes. I was in a fever of curiosity. I opened the door and crept into the dark passage. They stood just inside the front door. Michael held a candle, and its light shone on the girl's face. She was leaning against the wall, pale as one dead, and her hand was pressed against her side.

"You must be brave," he said. "You are sure that Geordie went in the boat?" Was it possible? and I had never suspected his intention.

"My maid saw him in the village, and heard him persuade old Robin; he offered him money, and then he said that I should be angry if he didn't go for the honor of the village—it's my fault, all my fault—two lives, two lives!"

I was much moved by her anguish, which was real enough. As I came down the passage Michael turned upon me.

"Oh, it's you," he said; "don't wake the others; Geordie is not in the house; Miss Falconhurst thinks that he has gone to sea with old Robin: she came to ask if he was here; she has done exactly the right thing."

Then he turned to her again, and tenderly, as if he were speaking to a child, he asked her:

"Are you strong enough now? Are you ready to go back with us?"

She stood up and pushed the heavy hair from her temples.

"Yes," she said, "I am ready ; but don't take me home ; let me go with you to the shore."

He looked down on her with infinite pity.

"It will be all right," he said ; "the wind is falling already."

Then he opened the door, and she seized his arm as the strong wind met her on the threshold. He chose the low path along the coast. Once out of doors I found that the worst of the gale was over, and that another day had dawned. The wind was still blustering strong and free from the west ; but I could judge how much more violent it had been when I saw the sea. Great waves were rolling in, hurrying to dash themselves with thunderous roar on the low rocks, while spray came driving thick over the green sward and the path where we were traveling with what speed we might. Miss Falconhurst had found new strength ; I found it hard to keep up with her. We passed the little sandy bay and struggled on.

"Look !" cried Michael, with a great shout, "they are safe ; yonder she rides."

I looked, and saw a single-masted fishing-boat off the long point which runs out into the

sea. She was evidently trying to round this spit of land, beyond which is the harbor. In my ignorance of nautical matters I concluded that she was safe.

"She will not do it," said Miss Falconhurst in a tone of despair. It was certain that the boat made no way. She was barely holding her own. We stared, trying to see that she moved. Suddenly she turned; she rolled in the trough; a great wave smote her in the side; then round she went with an effort, and ran before the breeze.

"Run to the village for men," cried Michael, giving me a push, and in a moment he was flying back along the shore. I turned in the opposite direction, but even in turning saw that my mission was useless; two young fishermen were hurrying with cork about their waists and ropes in their hands; we joined them, and hastened in pursuit of Michael.

Meanwhile the boat was leaping shoreward; if she missed that one narrow sandy cove, which we knew so well, she would be smashed like a nutshell on the rocks. Even I, ignorant as I confess myself of things nautical, could

see this. Luckily there was a steady and skillful hand on board. Hustled and buffeted, the boat still held her course, and, coming with a wide curve, was driven plump into the sand. I tried to shout as I hurried along, but the next moment I thought that her danger was great as ever. She could not, like Miss Falconhurst's smaller craft, run into shallow water. She was stuck fast in sand, and the great waves following leaped on her and shook her like hounds. It seemed impossible to me that she could hold together for many minutes, and that the crew, after a long night's battle with storm, would have strength to reach the shore. We were not more than a hundred yards from the boat when she struck, and Michael was already on the beach. I remember that even in that whirl of thoughts and emotions I had faith that all would be well, since Michael Horatio Belbin was there. All the men in the boat were clustered in the bows; and now the youngest of them, a mere boy, crept out upon the bowsprit, and as a great wave drew back dropped into the shallow water; as he dropped Michael sprang to him, caught him in

his arms, and half led, half carried him to dry land. Then a man crawled out in his turn, watched for his chance, and dropped; he could scarcely stand, but by this time our two cork-jacketed mates were ready, and between them supported him to shore. Then I recognized the shrewd face of old Robin as he crept out on the bowsprit. He seemed as calm as ever, but when he stood among us he could not speak above a whisper. He tried to say something, but only a hoarse croaking was heard as he pointed back to his craft. While the fishermen were trying to understand him, Michael had grasped his meaning. As the next wave shrank back he followed it, and before we could see his purpose he had clambered up the side of the boat and disappeared.

I felt a grasp like iron on my wrist; Miss Falconhurst was by my side with parted lips and wide staring eyes. She was looking at the place where Michael had vanished, and I think did not know that she was touching me. Presently my friend appeared again, holding somebody close against him with his left arm; he glanced seaward, then in a moment he lowered his bur-

den from the bows, sprang after him, and caught him, as he reeled ; quick as he was, a great wave was almost on him ; he caught Geordie up in his two arms and staggered toward us ; the wave crashed on the boat with baffled fury, dashed on and hurled my friend from his foothold. Obeying some blind impulse I rushed forward, and the two fishermen with me ; some of us got hold of Michael, who never for an instant had loosened hold of his charge. As the spent wave recoiled, we dragged them up to safety, and Michael, without a word, laid George Effingham softly on the sand at the feet of Honoria Falconhurst.

There was clapping of hands and cheering, for by this time a motley crowd of fisher-folks and castle servants had gathered. Then I heard the General's voice giving quick peremptory orders. His daughter went to him and leaned on his arm. She was still very pale, and kept her eyes fixed on poor Effingham, as if she had no thought in the world but of the chances of his life.

Gentle Geordie was a pitiful sight. I could not help thinking how far from pleased he

would be if he fully realized this wretched appearance in public. As four men carried him through the crowd, he looked neither to right nor left; his eyes were wide open, but had an idly wondering look; his face was more yellow than pale, except for a long ugly scratch on his left temple.

"Gently, gently!" cried General Falconhurst, "and take him straight to the castle. I have sent to the housekeeper; she will have every thing ready."

Then he tucked his daughter's arm tight under his own, and stepped up the path after the wounded man with an unusual air of military authority.

"I'm thinking she's done for," said old Robin, who had found his voice.

"Who?" I asked, turning in a flutter of anxiety.

"Who should it be but the boat?"

"Can naught be done for her?" asked one of the younger men.

"Naught." So saying, old Robin shook himself and slouched off toward the village. The waves broke fiercely over his stranded bark, but

he gave her not another look. Some show emotion in one way, some in another. I fancied that old Robin frowned overmuch at his tobacco, and that his sturdy thumb shoved it down into his pipe with unnecessary severity.

CHAPTER IX.

ALL day my mind was busy with the events of that exciting morning. I was feverish and restless, and ever and anon I fell into uneasy slumber; but even in sleep I saw the doomed boat and the big waves breaking, or listened again and again to those discussions on heroism which had been so common of late. Again and again I heard the tales, which Miss Falconhurst had told us with a most effective tremolo in her voice; and the books all eloquent of gallant deeds, which Michael had lent to her, crowded on my memory and dinned their swelling contents in my ears. My mind was in a whirl. I could scarce distinguish fact from fiction. This heroism was no more a thing of printer's ink, a parcel of foolscap; it had come close to us, and touched our common life with fire; we—we were heroes—all heroes more or less. Was I a hero? Had I, too, done a deed of daring? It was easy to place my conduct in such a

light that it assumed heroic proportions, vast and vague. As I grew calmer I placed my conduct in such a light, and considered it. My friend was tottering shoreward under a lifeless weight; the strong wave swept him from his feet; in an instant I had sprung forward into the seething water; Michael was safe. Was that description false? I hoped not. But if I placed my conduct in another light, it seemed different. My friend was knocked down by a great wave; at this sight I was seized with a kind of vertigo; I stumbled blindly forward; I clutched my friend; I clung to him as I had often clung in difficulties; Michael and Geordie and I were lugged ashore together. I could not be quite sure that this description was less true than the other. After all, are not most of these heroic actions due to impulse? Perhaps to be subject to heroic vertigo is to be a hero. Perhaps I was a hero. I was inclined to give myself the benefit of the doubt. It is a strange fact that this question, which seemed and indeed still seems to me a question of great interest, has never for one moment occupied any one of my companions,

Never from that moment to this have I heard, or heard of, a single comment, favorable or unfavorable, on my share in the actions of that eventful morning.

When I turned from the review of my conduct to that of George Effingham, I found it far easier to decide upon its merits. He had been very much to blame. Pierced in spite of all seeming imperviousness by the darts of a girl, he had determined to prove his courage. Anxious to be perfectly just to him, I put myself in his place. I asked myself what possible advantage he could gain by his conduct; I confess that I could see none. For this end, which seemed to me useless, what had he not suffered, and made us suffer? He had passed an awful night; he had given us the greatest anxiety; he had imperiled our valuable lives; he had appeared to less advantage than at any other moment in his life; he had been carried to the feet of her whose admiration he had striven to compel, dirty, yellow, made hideous by a ragged scratch. He had only accomplished one thing, a thing which he had been far from purposing. He had given an oppor-

tunity for heroic action to Michael Horatio Belbin. One fact was now beyond dispute—Michael was a hero. His action had been as deliberate as it was wise and bold. With the glance of an eagle he had discerned his course: with the courage of a mother he had saved the man who vexed his soul. He had done a gallant deed under the very eyes of the lady who was to be won by gallantry, and whom he sought to win. He had had a great chance, and had used it. He had been practical, as he always was.

With perfect confidence I looked to Michael to improve his advantage. How strangely was I deceived! The day made memorable by my friend's great action was a Tuesday. All that day he was locked in his room; his door was twice opened so far that he could take in food; for the rest it remained closed—closed even against me. I could hear nothing when I listened at the crack. He gave me no answer when I called through the keyhole: I was content, for I thought that he was maturing his plans. On Wednesday, at breakfast, I learned that he had gone early to the castle

for news of Geordie. I rubbed my hands secretly under the table; I thought that he was taking time by the forelock. Motherwell, who had been Michael's companion, came back alone; I glowed with the delightful certainty that all was going well. There was good news of George Effingham, who needing nothing but care and rest was in full enjoyment of both. Motherwell spoke less confidently of Miss Falconhurst; but then I knew that this messenger, our supersolid Hermes, was suffering from an attack of sentiment. He said that the young lady had been a little delirious, and was still nervous and excitable. A little later I saw him draw Mr. Betel aside and confide something to him, which I could not overhear; I fancied, however, that as he spoke he glanced at me with an embarrassed, almost irritated expression. Mr. Betel listened with a score of sharp nods and pecks, and was plainly troubled. At that time I could form no conception of the nature of this confidence.

As the day wore on, I grew more and more eager to see what was going on at the castle.

I could not bear to miss a sight of the game. Yet I did not speak; for I wished my eagerness to be unobserved, my watchfulness to be unsuspected. Much to my surprise, there was no suggestion of a visit to the castle. I lingered over my books, and looked askance at my companions. Their conduct puzzled me. Motherwell was flushed and irritable; but I thought little of that, for I had long since penetrated his secret, and I now suspected him of a tardy foresight of Michael's immediate success. The Rev. Stanley Betel was more than usually restless; but that was nothing. It is true that on this occasion he outdid himself. He darted first at one book, then at another; he assiduously consulted a Bible under the impression that he hunted a word in his Greek lexicon; he began sentences which he never finished; and whenever he opened his mouth, he dropped his little "well" twenty times in a minute. Mr. Betel was unquiet, and Motherwell was fidgety; but neither of these phenomena surprised me. The strange fact which puzzled me was that on this day, of all days, there came neither from Motherwell nor

from Mr. Betel the usual suggestion that we should all go up to the castle. At last I could await their initiative no longer. I closed my book, and proposed with a sufficiently careless air that Mr. Betel should go with me to the Falconhursts. The little gentleman jumped and gasped. "No," he ejaculated after a few moments. "That is—in fact, no, no ; that is—well—no ; I think—well—that—that it is better—well—that none of us—in fact, none—should go—well—to-day to the castle—well. Miss Falconhurst is not—well—in fact, well."

Thus did the little tricks of our reverend friend become multiplied under a disquieting influence. I wondered what that influence could be.

"I think," I said, "that it can't do any harm to Miss Falconhurst if I just walk up and look after Michael ; perhaps he'll come home with me."

I was rising as if to go, when Motherwell spoke testily, with his voice pitched higher than usual. "It's no good your going for Michael," he said, "for he ain't there."

"He isn't there?" I exclaimed.

"No. Of course not. We neither of us went in ; we asked about Geordie at the door, and about—about Miss Falconhurst."

"Then where has Michael been all this time?" My inferences were falling like a card house.

"He walked on to Dronemouth."

"To Dronemouth !"

"Yes. He said he wanted a long walk. He'll be back this evening."

"He'll stop at the castle on his way back?"

"Certainly not," said Motherwell crossly ; "we both met the General, and we all agreed that nobody should go there to-day—nobody." He repeated the word "nobody" with some tartness. I sat down again, astonished at my mistake, a Marius amid the ruins of a house of cards.

CHAPTER X.

“**W**HAT time shall you go to the castle?”
I asked Michael, with apparent carelessness.

“I shan’t go there to-day,” he answered, calmly. “The lad and I are going to walk to Dronemouth.”

The lad laughed; but I saw nothing to laugh at. It was Thursday; Michael had not begun to improve his advantage. For what was he waiting? What was his plan? I still believed that his action must be in accordance with consummate sagacity; but I was almost distracted by my inability to comprehend it. Why was he letting slip this magnificent opportunity? Motherwell had told us with what fervor the General had greeted Michael; how the old hero had crowed at the prowess of the young hero. Surely now was the time for mounting the triumphal car, for wearing the becoming wreath of laurel, for winning the

young lady. The father was already won; the daughter was awaiting a conqueror. Surely now, when she was nervous and unstrung, was the moment for action. If she recovered her wonted equanimity, her wonted subtlety, who could tell what long series of games might not be played before the final victory? Now when the girl was all disarmed, when in her exhaustion and excitement she was possessed by a vision of Michael saving her conscience from the awful burden of a human life, surely now was the moment to wring from her some words of fervent gratitude or admiration of a golden deed, which on some future day, when she was calm and strong again, might be so twisted as to bind her like a promise. I was utterly unable to understand my friend's delay; but yet I could not abandon my belief in the foresight and prudence of Michael Horatio Belbin.

When Michael had stalked away with the lad chattering at his ear, we others made a show of study. I don't think we deceived each other. Books were of small importance at that time. For my part, I was thinking how I could slip away from my companions

and make a visit of inspection to the castle. If Michael saw fit to absent himself, I could do no harm by satisfying my curiosity, by seeing for myself the mental condition of Miss Falconhurst—a matter so important to my friend. If I suggested a visit, I felt a presentiment that one or both of my companions would raise objections. I kept silence and watched them. At last Motherwell banged his big book on the table, stretched himself till his chair groaned under him, yawned vastly, and with a sort of roar hoisted himself on to his legs. Then he smiled in a propitiatory manner, and declared his intention of visiting old Robin. He would go and talk to the Robins, father and son, about their new boat, for which we were raising a subscription. "One of them is out of the way," I thought to myself. The Rev. Stanley Betel left alone with me exhibited signs of uneasiness, which I was not slow to encourage by fixing my eyes on him suddenly, by dazzling him with my silver pencil-case twirled carelessly in the sunlight, and by other similar methods. At last he too tripped to his feet, and after some

broken remarks assured me with unnecessary earnestness that he had seen a flower, "a—well—in fact, flower," somewhere at some time, and that if he did not secure it now, he "might—well—never, in fact—well—never—". And so saying he hastily quitted the apartment. Luck comes to those who know how to wait. I had waited. I waited yet a little longer. Then I stole cautiously out. I avoided the path, which led along the shore to the village, whither Motherwell had gone. I kept a sharp look-out on banks and in copses for the bent and botanizing form of Mr. Betel, for the flutter of his long coat-tails. I saw nobody. I drew near to my destination. Now, as an observer, I have found it a good rule to approach a place from an unusual quarter. It is astonishing how often one sees something, which one is not meant to see, when one enters by a back door or runs up a private staircase. I am convinced that to the neglect of such little rules of conduct—rules which seem to the careless unimportant, but which are so obviously sensible—many a failure of able and worthy men may be attributed. It

is good to approach the place where observations are to be made from an unusual quarter. On this occasion I did not forget my principle; the result gave me one more proof of its value.

When I was near the castle, I passed round and below it, and made my way by a path half overgrown with brambles to the foot of a steep flight of mossy steps, which climbed to the terrace from the sea. I knew that by this route I should appear suddenly at the end of the terrace furthest from the house; that in a minute I could reach a little side door which was never locked; that I could be among my friends before they knew that I was within a mile of them. It was a capital plan. Even now I am thrilled by its success, though the fact which it revealed to me was unpalatable enough. I had completed only the first part of my programme when I made the great discovery. When I was within a few paces of the top of the old stone steps, I found that I was close under the parapet, and that by standing on tiptoe I could command a view of the terrace. I cautiously raised my head in a slanting direction, till my right eye peeped over the edge. Then I ducked like

a flash, while I felt the blood rush to my face. I had seen enough. Yet I could not resist the desire of peeping again. I was even more cautious than before, although I felt that there was small chance of these two young people seeing any thing but each other. It was a pretty picture. Shocked as I was, I admitted its artistic value. In the temperate sunshine of a still autumn noon Gentle Geordie was walking slowly toward me ; he was pale, and the pallor was made more effective by the strip of black plaster on his temple ; but his lips had recovered that sweet insinuating smile which was so often theirs, and his eyes seemed darker and larger for the wan hue of his cheek ; those eyes, full of devotion and eloquent of sweet thoughts, were turned upon Honoria Falconhurst. One glance at the girl's face was enough. Where was now that air of maidenly defiance, with which she was wont to confront the world ? where the proud raising of the head and side-long look of scorn, with which she had so often listened to George Effingham's smiling confessions of selfishness and cowardice ? Her face was like a child's now, full of sweet trouble ;

the defiant lips were trembling, the proud eyes veiled ; yet she bore herself bravely, and the arm on which he leaned as he moved slowly was strong to aid. She had never been half so beautiful before. I stared in wonder ; but even in the first glow of admiration I was struck cold by the thought of Michael my friend. What a loss was his ! What had he not lost by his folly ! In the bitterness of the moment I for the first time in my life boldly accused of folly Michael Horatio Belbin.

Every link in the chain was mine, but too late. It was all natural, inevitable. She had driven George Effingham into danger by her taunts ; she had felt with an agony of feeling that if he died she would be guilty of his death ; she had watched and prayed for his safety with all the intensity of a strong woman. If he died she was sure that she would never be happy again ; he was well, and she was overwhelmed with gratitude to him (oh the perverse irrationality of woman !) for consenting to live. The next step was no step at all—the happiness of her life had depended on him for hours ; it continued to depend on him—she loved him. This

had been the chain of feelings; and when the real hero, in all the pride and glory of heroic action, should have appeared, overwhelming, irresistible, he had been walking to Drone-mouth. He was walking to Dronemouth once more. What malign power had paralyzed the practical wisdom of my friend, that he might not foresee that combination which was now before my eyes?

As George and Honoria drew near to the end of the terrace, I stooped, and turning sped noiselessly down the old stairs. When I had ceased to behold the actual youth and maiden, doubts of my own eyesight thronged perplexing me. I would make assurance doubly sure. I hurried along the path by which I had come; I reached the main entrance of the castle; I mastered my excitement, and with the air of a casual visitor rang the bell.

A new surprise awaited me. Ushered into the library, I found, beside my host, Motherwell and the Rev. Stanley Betel. All turned with a start at the sound of my name; and I saw that the General looked at Mr. Betel with raised eyebrows before he came forward to meet

me. General Falconhurst was polite, but I felt that his manner lacked the usual friendliness. There was an awkward silence.

"I didn't expect to see you here," I said, looking from Motherwell to Mr. Betel and back again.

"No," said Mr. Betel, "that is—well—no. And I think—well—that perhaps we had better both be going now; Miss Falconhurst—well——"

"The fact is," said the General, breaking in with his high voice and decisive manner, "that my daughter is hardly yet strong enough" (I thought of her appearance on the terrace) "to receive visitors. I am sure you will excuse me if I suggest to you that some other day——"

He stopped, but there was no mistaking his meaning. I bowed, expressed my hope that Miss Falconhurst would soon be better, and retired. Mr. Betel followed me.

"Where's Motherwell?" I asked when we were outside the castle.

"Motherwell?—well—well—; perhaps he—possibly that is—; well, in fact, I don't think that Motherwell is coming."

"Then why did he send away *me*?"

Our reverend friend seemed to struggle with infinite perplexities. He opened his mouth; he began to speak; he stopped; he darted his head at me; he raised his finger and thumb to his ear; and then pecked with them again and again at my chest. At last he spoke, and in despair spoke plainly.

"The fact is that Miss Falconhurst is not well—well—well; she is nervous, and has taken a strange fancy; she thinks that you, ever since you first came, have been watching—in fact (it's a most extraordinary fancy), in fact—well—have been playing the—in fact—spy. She begged that you might be kept away for a few days—on some pretense—without rudeness—till she was less nervous. We tried to keep you away, but——"

I could have laughed aloud. It was a clever move of this very clever young woman. She had dreaded my power of observation. She had feared that I should detect her game in the hour of her weakness. As to a nervous dislike of my society, that explanation was too far-fetched, too little probable. What is there to dislike in *me*?

CHAPTER XI.

FRIENDSHIP required but one thing more of me. I must tell every thing to Michael Horatio Belbin. For weeks I had observed in silence till my burden of observations had become intolerable ; I had locked my thoughts in my bosom till the weight lay heavy on my chest. I must go to Michael and tell him all : all that I had seen, all that I had thought. I longed to support him in the hour of his great disappointment ; and I was curious to see how he took it. Perhaps I might meet him on the Dronemouth road. The inland road was shorter than the path on the shore : he had gone by the latter, and was the more likely to come back by the former. I broke from Mr. Betel at the cross-roads, and turned toward Dronemouth. The air was crisp and invigorating ; I walked swiftly in a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions. In a time which seemed incredibly short, I reached the place

where the road rose gradually through a wood of beeches, which almost met above it. The frost of the night before had robbed the trees of many leaves, which, lit by the slanting sunlight of the afternoon, lay richly red and deep upon the path. Down this triumphal way came Michael with springy step and head in air. Fortune favored me—he was alone. He had dropped the lad somewhere, and was enjoying one of those lonely walks which he loved. Would he forgive my intrusion? How would this proud and vigorous youth bear my crushing news? I was possessed by eager curiosity, and yet for a moment I was tempted to scramble over the oak paling and to hide myself in the dry brown fern; but it was too late. He saw me, and stood still. How grand he looked, erect and glorified by slanting rays, a hero crowned! I was on fire with eagerness to see how he would bear himself when he knew that once again the prize had been wrested from him by George Effingham. Michael came down the road with a half-smile on his mouth, and nodded as he passed. I turned and hurried to his side. Then all that I

had to say burst from me in a flood. He strode on, staring before him, and I, from time to time forced to a trot and talking without end, was at a loss for breath. Nevertheless, gasping, perhaps now and then incoherent, I told him every thing, all that I had seen, all that I had thought for weeks past, all my hopes of his success. I peered up into his face, but I could not read his expression. He was calm and inscrutable. At last, after a pause for breathing, I brought before him, as suddenly as I could, the picture which I had seen on the terrace that day. He stopped short and stood still. Now I looked for the breaking forth of pent feelings; I half feared, half longed for the explosion. There was another surprise for me. Michael turned to me with a strange smile on his face, and laid a strong hand on my shoulder. He faced the sun; and yet I could not read his looks. Nor could I understand the tone in which he spoke; there was something like pity in his voice—pity for *me*.

“And so,” said he, “you think that I would marry a girl for a big house, and stables, and tennis-courts, and rabbits?”

How is it possible **that** I had failed to see that he was really in love? I must confess I too had made a mistake.

Ingham's luck is something which defies explanation," I said crossly; **for I** was annoyed.

"He deserves it," said Michael; "and no one could take it better; he **has** the sweetest girl in the world, and yet she may trust that he will make her happy." His voice had softened, and he seemed to be speaking to himself. Then he looked at me again and smiled. "Over-victorious Geordie," he said softly.

"I won't go in for the fellowship," I cried, and a wistful and consolatory thought struck me. "Or shall I," said Michael coolly; "I shall go by degree and go to Texas."

"Texas!" I exclaimed in dismay. What would be my fate? Must I choose between my old friend and my one familiar friend, and the life of civilization? "Oh!" I cried out in exasperation, "who can measure the mischief of this?"

"No," said my friend sternly. He put his hands upon my shoulders, and turned me to face the setting sun; **I was a child in**

applied. Perhaps my friend's excitement made him a little unjust.

"You may win Miss Falconhurst yet," I suggested timidly.

"No!" There was such certainty in his tone, that my last hope vanished.

"Oh, why did you neglect your opportunity?" I said, almost blaming him in my vexation. "Why didn't you go to her fresh from saving George Effingham—from your heroic action—then you would have won the whole thing."

"It was too late."

"Too late!"

"The second time that Geordie went to the castle, I knew what would be."

"They did nothing but quarrel."

Michael looked at me, and even smiled as he said, "I have eyes."

I knew that he had eyes. But had I not eyes too? Had I not made it my business to observe this matter? Here Michael must have been mistaken; the fact that he loved the girl accounted for any errors; his clear sight had been obscured by vehement feeling; love is

blind. How is it possible that I had failed to see that he was really in love? I must confess that I too had made a mistake.

"Effingham's luck is something which defies calculation," I said crossly; for I was annoyed.

"He deserves it," said Michael; "and no man could take it better; he has the sweetest temper in the world, and yet she may trust him; he will make her happy." His voice had dropped, and he seemed to be speaking to himself. Then he looked at me again and smiled. "The ever-victorious Geordie," he said softly.

"He won't go in for the fellowship," I cried, as a new and consolatory thought struck me.

"Nor shall I," said Michael coolly; "I shall take my degree and go to Texas."

"To Texas!" I exclaimed in dismay. What was to be my fate? Must I choose between my friend, my one familiar friend, and the blessings of civilization? "Oh!" I cried out in my vexation, "who can measure the mischief of women?"

"Stop," said my friend sternly. He put both hands upon my shoulders, and turned me till I faced the setting sun; I was a child in

his hands. "Now," he said, "I want to say a word to you. I can forgive you—perhaps too easily—for undervaluing Gentle Geordie. I can forgive you for believing me to be that base thing—a cold-blooded, intriguing fortune-hunter. Though you have known me a long time, and called me friend, I can forgive you your low opinion of me. But I shall find it very hard to forgive you for breathing, day after day, the same air as one of the best and noblest women in the world, and all the time being blind as a mole to her great goodness and nobility."

He still held me, and looked sternly in my face. Then he let me go.

I would as soon have crossed a hungry lion as dared to differ at that moment from Michael Horatio Belbin. He was not himself. The influence of passion is wonderful. Here was the most sagacious and prudent of men, blinded—made almost ridiculous in my eyes—by love.

I did not venture to say any thing; but, of course, I knew very well that he was mistaken, and that I was right.

LORD RICHARD AND I

CHAPTER I.

AMONG the characters which I have found worthy of study, that of Lord Richard stands pre-eminent. No other man has so successfully deceived the world. The instinct of woman and the analysis of man have been equally at fault. His many friends, male and female, love him for his frankness and geniality; his political colleagues regard him in spite of his admitted sagacity as a very simple fellow. He is raised on a pedestal as The Honest Man, who sees clearly enough, but whose chief claim to admiration is that he is incapable of deceit, almost incapable of concealment. It may be that there are such guileless men in the world, and that they are not simpletons. I will not be dogmatic on this matter. I will content myself with the assertion that Lord Richard, whom the world took for this combination of open simplicity and political sagacity, was a master of dissimulation, the most wily and subtle of men.

Even now I can recall my first impression of my friend's simplicity—an impression so strong that, but for my invariable rule, I should have trusted it. As I summon back to me his square figure, his blunt speech, his open eyes turned to mine with an air of innocent wonder, his easy talk of things political, I am almost surprised that I too was not deceived. By a constant effort I succeeded in reserving my judgment; I was rewarded by the gradual discovery of a most intricate and interesting character; I found him out. I was almost frightened by my unique success. I had to take the greatest pains lest he should discover that I knew his real nature; and in spite of all my care I soon found that he felt an occasional uneasiness in my presence. I suspected this uneasiness, and I cautiously confirmed my suspicion by a few experiments. How happy he was in his inimitable air of innocence! He would look at me with an expression almost infantine, as he pushed his thick hair from his brow; he would seem to be puzzled by my constant presence; he started sometimes when he found me at his elbow. "Hang it!" he

would say in his simple, hearty fashion, "hang it! What are you creeping about here for?" Then I would make some jesting answer, as if I entered into his frank humor. I remember that one day, when I explained my presence by reminding him that I was his secretary, he burst into that jolly laugh which had deceived the nation. "I'll be hanged," he cried out as soon as he could speak for laughter, "I'll be hanged if I know how you came to be my secretary." I only answered with a smile. It was unnecessary for me to inform Lord Richard that I had attached myself to him in obedience to the advice of my dear old tutor at the university, because I considered him the most rising politician of the day. I knew well enough that to give him information was to carry coals to Newcastle; that he knew all which he cared to know. He had an admirable manner.

I may say without vanity that I was an excellent secretary. I was constant in attendance, ready with my pen, patient in investigation. An apparent carelessness about his correspondence was in agreement with Lord Richard's attitude. As he seemed frank and

guileless in speech, so also did he seem indifferent who might read the many letters which he left open on his tables. Of course I was not deceived. He knew well enough what to leave open. Yet in spite of all his cleverness I learned something more than he meant me to. By extraordinary patience and vigilance I succeeded in picking up many scraps of the secret history of contemporary politics. I kept a note-book; I copied many bits of letters; I wrote down many fragments of conversation. Little by little I obtained some valuable knowledge of the hidden mechanism of politics. I already felt at times as if my hand were on the wires. I had made up my mind to go in heart and soul—if I may use the expression—for a political career; and every day I had more and more reason to congratulate myself on my choice of my friend Lord Richard as the first step on the upward path. If ambition be a crime, I plead guilty.

I confess that I was surprised one morning, when my friend invited me to walk with him in the park. He was generally careful to avoid

asking for my society. Doubtless he kept in mind the fact that it might suit him some day to assert that he was under no obligation to me. However, on this fateful morning his habitual air of frank geniality came so near to jollity, that my suspicions were immediately aroused. He would not attend to his work; he had an air almost boyish. Of course he was not a boy, though he is still regarded, especially in the political world, as a young man. These sprigs of nobility get such a start in life, that any one of them with a quarter of my friend's ability might be a rising statesman at an age when men like myself have barely got a foot on the lowest rung of the ladder. But though Lord Richard was not more than five or six-and-thirty, he had no right to look so young as he looked on that eventful day. He assumed the most tempestuous spirits. "Come out," he said, "and see the sun, and the smart people in the Park." He cultivated this habit of speaking of smart people; he liked to talk as if he were a rough-and-ready son of the soil; even trifles such as these went to the increase of his popularity. "Come and look at the

swells," he said ; " and tell me all the harm you know of every one of them ; then you'll be happy." I laughed at his pleasantry ; I did not refuse to go with him ; indeed, I was not unnaturally pleased to be seen with Lord Richard in the Park.

My pleasure was short-lived. In the very center of the gay crowd, while I was leaning on my friend's arm and regarding the lovely ladies with respectful interest, my eyes suddenly encountered those of my cousin Tom. It was impossible to pretend not to see him. Lady Raeborough and a few of the choicest ornaments of London society were passing between us at the moment ; but this did not prevent Tom from hailing me with enthusiasm by a ridiculous name which had been given me by my schoolfellows. I have always disliked this silly schoolboy trick of giving nicknames. I could see that the fair Countess smiled, and Lord Richard began, as usual, to laugh aloud. Such want of tact as Tom's is scarcely less than criminal. My cousin's hat was shabby, and his clothes dusty, but his face beamed with its usual unreasonable satisfaction. Tom is not wholly a humbug ; I

really believe that the company in which he saw me was not the sole cause of the warmth of his greeting ; he is strangely impulsive, and has a most absurd feeling for kin. Even the chagrin, which at the moment I could not wholly conceal, did not moderate his ardor. It was only natural that I should be pained to see him there and then. Indeed, I did not care to see him any where. He was only my father's cousin, and I had never approved of him. He was a shiftless man, and by no means a successful one ; he had let slip some admirable chances of bettering his position ; he had defended his folly by a parade of scruples, which were old-fashioned and fantastic. Indeed, there was in Tom much which called for the gravest disapproval. Judge if I was pleased to be greeted in the most brilliant crowd of the world by this elderly and shabby journalist !

As I was hurriedly asking the necessary questions about his wife and family, and at the same time forming in my mind a picturesque account of this eccentric cousin, which I could give to my friend, Lord Richard surprised me by resisting my attempts to draw him away. He is far

more solid than I ; he detained me easily. "Introduce me," he said in a loud whisper. I introduced him wondering ; but the next moment I perceived his motive ; I felt sure that he had recognized in Tom one of the gentlemen of the press. Nobody knew better than Lord Richard the value of politeness to journalists. It was strange to hear these two men talk at first acquaintance with a manner as if neither had a thought to conceal. As for Tom, I really believe that he hides very little. Clever and accomplished as he is, I have sometimes thought him little short of an idiot. He did not seem in the least degree overcome when Lord Richard pressed him to visit him. "I shall be delighted," he said ; "and I can look up my young cousin here at the same time ; he's often with you, I believe." "By George, he is !" said my friend ; "he's closer than a brother ;" and he burst out laughing again. As we proceeded on our way, I heard him murmuring to himself that silly name which had been given me at school. It was too ridiculous in a man of Lord Richard's position.

When we had walked a little way without

further conversation, my companion asked with a suddenness which was, without doubt, the result of calculation :

“Was that your cousin’s daughter?”

Nothing escapes Lord Richard. I had hoped that he had not noticed Delia, where she stood half withdrawn at her father’s shabby elbow. I myself had detected her in a moment, and had noticed with a strange emotion that the pretty child was changing to a pretty woman. Ah me, for the follies of boyhood! How I remembered our games, when we were children together, in my cousin’s old garden! “*Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur!*” But no time had been given me now for wandering thoughts and tender reminiscences. When I saw Delia in the crowd, I had decided in an instant that I could pretend not to see her. It was far better that I should ignore her. It was no less than my duty. When Delia was a little girl, with floating hair and grave blue eyes, I had promised a thousand times that she should be my wife; I had been strangely drawn toward the lovely child. One can not be too careful. I had left all that so far behind me; fortune

had carried me away from that youthful silly dream. As out of the corner of my eye I marked her standing there very neat and pretty in her simple gown; as I noted that the charm had grown with her growth, and that she had inherited none of her father's untidy air, I felt that for her sake, as well as for my own, I had better see her as little as possible. On this occasion I had been able not to see her at all.

"Was that his daughter?" asked Lord Richard. For a moment I knew not how to reply. I could not acknowledge that I had seen my little cousin, and had not spoken to her. "Was there a girl with him?" I asked in return. "There was," he answered, with a sort of mockery in his voice; and in a moment he added, "By George! is it possible that she and you are cousins?" "Only second cousins," I said. "I hope she may remember you in her prayers," he said strangely. Then he seemed to forget my existence. I did not interrupt him; I supposed that he was busy with the intricacies of diplomacy. I moved quietly at his elbow, till I heard him humming to himself. I listened,

but I could not catch the words ; I made out, however, that he was humming a German song. I more than once detected the word "augen," which on consulting the dictionary at home I discovered to signify "eyes."

CHAPTER II.

NOT long after the unfortunate meeting in the Park, Lord Richard suddenly spoke to me of the neglected borough of Mudbro'. I knew that there was likely to be a vacancy there; I had been waiting for a good opportunity of insinuating my own merits as a candidate; but I had never expected that the first suggestion of my standing for Parliament would come from my friend. Of course I was well aware that the influence of Lord Richard's family in Mudbro' was practically decisive. If the present member was really bent on retirement, and if the family supported me cordially, I might leap in a moment into that position to which I had long intended to climb. But my friend's unsought suggestion frightened me. What could be his object? I could not guess. I could only assume a proper modesty—a doubt of my own worthiness. "Surely," I said, "you must know of some more important person."

"You'll do capitally," he cried out with his big voice ; "you're made for politics ; you don't mind working up details ; you're good at ferretting out things ; you're not thin-skinned."

I laughed in a deprecating manner at his praise ; but still my mind was busy with questions of his motive. I began to think that he wished to loosen the cords which bound us to one another. It seemed probable enough that with his great acuteness he had decided that I was learning too much of himself and of his correspondence with political friends. Of his real motive for banishing me, I confess that I had not the slightest suspicion. As I looked at him doubtfully he began to laugh, as usual. This habit of laughter, which, while it covers awkward pauses, commits a man to nothing, is of great use to Lord Richard. He arranged for my immediate departure, as if it were the best joke in the world. He planned interviews for me with the sitting member, with the local lawyer, with his own distinguished father. The fact that I was to be a guest in that famous family mansion naturally weakened my instinctive opposition to these sudden schemes. Finally

my friend begged me not to hurry back. I hastened to assure him that I should make no unnecessary delay; and that, if I were ever fortunate enough to gain a seat in The House, even that need not prevent me from making myself useful to him. "I could still act as secretary," I said. "No, no, no—damn it, no!" he cried, and hurried out of the room. I laughed at the joke, but I was still disquieted by doubts. How true my instinct was has yet to be shown.

Alas! I lingered at Mudbro'. The cordiality of the amiable if inefficient member for the borough, the stupidity of the principal constituents, the luxury of the castle in which I was a guest—all these combined to prolong my absence from my friend. Slowly and happily I was winning my way into popular favor; day by day in the leisurely life of that quiet spot I was confirming my position as its future representative; when on a sudden I was awakened from my placidity by the news of the great catastrophe. It was in the library of his ancestral home that I opened the paper with no presentiment, and read that Lord Richard had been blinded by a flash of lightning. I could

scarcely believe my eyes. Such was my faith in the man's craft and power, that I could scarcely imagine him the victim of an accident. I found it hard to believe that any thing had happened to him which was not the result of his own calculations. Even when I had realized the dreadful truth, I had no suspicion of the extent of the misfortune which had befallen me. Indeed, I saw good in the evil. I saw that Lord Richard's blindness would make him doubly dependent on my care and help. Although I noted—as it is my habit to note details apparently unimportant—that, when Lord Richard met with his terrible accident, he was driving himself home from the suburb in which my cousin Tom lived, I confess that I attached no importance to the fact. It was not for the sake of playing with lightning that my friend had planned my absence in his native borough.

I did not waste time in idle lamentation. I left that to the victim's kinsfolks at the castle. Now was the time for me to hurry to Lord Richard's side. No one knew better than I what is expected from a friend; I had studied the subject. After all proper expressions of

condolence I hurried from the noble mansion, where I had passed such happy hours.

As soon as I reached London I hurried to my friend's abode. I let myself in by means of one of his latch-keys which I always carried. I stepped noiselessly up stairs; I did not know in what condition the nerves of the poor sufferer might be. At the top of the stairs I turned aside into the little back room; I peeped cautiously round the heavy curtain which hung across the open doorway; I feared that my sudden appearance might startle the invalid. As I peered into the shaded study, I was reassured by the sound of my friend's voice. He was speaking in his usual tone, with that blunt, straightforward manner which I envied. For a moment I thought that the whole story must be false; I drew back my head, that I might consider my position. Then it struck me that he might be exaggerating his misfortune—pretending to be wholly blind, that he might excite to the highest point the popular interest and sympathy. In this I did him more than credit.

I waited in silence to discover to whom my friend was talking. Presently I heard the

voice of my cousin Tom; and I felt sure (I confess my ill-founded certainty) that I understood the meaning of the situation. How soon, I said to myself, has he found a use for the confidential journalist to whom I introduced him! I felt no doubt (I confess it) that he was arranging with Tom how the story should be told in the metropolitan and in the provincial press; how England might be made to thrill from one end to the other by an account of this sudden catastrophe which had befallen a rising public servant, and of the truly British pluck with which the awful consequences were borne. Intense curiosity nailed me to the spot. I had no time to think of the peculiarity of my position, as I listened with all my ears behind the heavy curtain. Even if I had tried to make my presence known, the words, which presently reached me, would have stricken me dumb. "It seems impossible," said Tom—"my little Delia!" What was this? I gave such a gasp, that I thought it must be heard. Could it be a sort of cipher used by these two men, lest there should be eavesdroppers? No! The idea was absurd. How could there be

fear of eavesdroppers in Lord Richard's private rooms? As the talk went on, all doubt was speedily removed. I stood spell-bound; I could not utter a sound; it was impossible for me to make my presence known.

After a silence, which seemed long, Lord Richard spoke. "It seems almost impossible to me," he said. "I thought that I did not care a jot for all the women in the world. I was rather badly treated by a woman, once, when I was a boy. After that I made up my mind to do without sentiment; I went in for politics; I thought I was strong as a house—and it has come to this." There was something both comical and pathetic in my friend's voice. I could not think what he meant by this strange departure; I did not try to think; all my mind was given to noting his every word, to impressing it on my memory. My report is absolutely accurate. My cousin Tom muttered some words which did not reach my ears; and then Lord Richard began again speaking slowly and low, as if he were thinking aloud. "Sometimes of late," he said, "I have caught myself in a strange mood, wondering if I had

not flung away the fairest gift of life, if it would not be sad to grow old with no one near me—no one to care for me much—no one but some fellow who served me for his own interest, climbed on my shoulders, and would kick me down when I could help him no higher.” How morbid a line of thought was this into which Lord Richard pretended to have fallen! Surely he could always command better service than this, which he foreshadowed for the softening of my cousin Tom. It struck me as overdone.

“I never felt so strange,” my friend continued presently, with the same musing tone, “as I did that morning, when I met you in the Park. If I were superstitious—and perhaps I am—I should say that I knew I was to meet my fate. My heart was beating like a boy’s as I found myself in that crowd. As I spoke to you, I saw blue eyes look at me with an innocent curiosity; I saw—as I shall never see again.”

There was so strange a silence that I could not help peeping round the curtain. I felt that I must know all, that I was in some sort

bound to understand the whole situation. When I peeped into the darkened room, I saw that my friend had assumed a striking pose. His head was bowed, and his arms, which lay straight along the arms of the chair, conveyed for the moment a suggestion of hopelessness. The whole attitude was an effective appeal for pity. Of course it produced the expected effect on Tom. I could see that my cousin was nervous and excited. His features were twisted into most comical expressions, and his eyes were wandering to the corners of the ceiling. He started spasmodically when Lord Richard referred to his blindness; he put out his hand with a jerk as if he would seize the other's; he only grasped the empty air; then, with his usual talent for doing the wrong thing, he began to whistle; then he stopped abruptly. "I'm awfully sorry," he said suddenly, with a voice which seemed to crack in the middle like a half-grown boy's. Lord Richard pulled himself up in his chair, and felt in his new darkness for the other's hand. It was odd to see this new movement in him, so unlike the old prompt use of the arms. The two men went through

the form of shaking hands—apparently for no reason.

“When I saw her again,” said my friend presently, “in that charming house of yours, she seemed to me like a little tidy angel, with all her heart for home, but—but with heaven in her eyes.” As he spoke, I seemed to see that extraordinary suburban dwelling, which I had known so well in my boyhood—a ramshackle collection of sheds and boxes, all opening into an untidy garden. To call that “a charming house!” To call my pretty little cousin “an angel!” As for that passage about her heart and eyes, I could only admire the speaker with a new wonder; even I had not suspected his power of improvising that sort of speech.

“I was frightened,” he said after another pause, “by the full consciousness of her divine childhood. I felt myself old and worldly—unworthy even to think of her. I came away that evening with the fixed purpose of crushing this mad fancy of mine. I was confident, and—and it has come to this.”

“It was awful,” said Tom; “it seems to me

impossible now; I can't believe that you—that you——”

“That I am blind or that I am in love?” asked Lord Richard; and he laughed out loud with his old boldness. “The blindness I can stand well enough,” he said without a tremor in his voice. “It’s a bore for my friends—I shall victimize you all—and for my political colleagues, poor devils! But it’s this other thing—it’s this other thing which makes me tremble like a girl. I could have crushed it, but I can not crush it now. Now in the darkness I see her eyes always; I can’t escape; I can’t fix my mind on the business of the session; I feel my weakness every moment. I shall take up my public life again; I shall do my work with secretaries and such like necessities—but I can’t face my long life at home alone. I can’t do it. I’ve an odd fancy that Heaven has taken my eyes, that I should learn the meaning of those eyes of hers. I—I feel a fool—will you give her to me?”

“You ask a great deal,” cried Tom almost angrily. “Poor little Delia! I don’t want her to marry and go away from me; she’s a child.

I'd much rather she married a boy—a nice innocent boy with his way to make in the world. I don't like her going among people who would hold her cheap; you must see that it would be a grave responsibility for her; it would be a hard life to look after a—ah! I beg your pardon."

"Of course it would," said the other; "I ought to be led about by a little dog, like the rest of 'em." He laughed as he spoke; but Tom seemed to be touched none the less; he fidgeted and coughed, and begged his pardon again. I have written down more than enough of this talk. In the end they agreed that Lord Richard should visit my cousin's strange abode as often as he liked; that he should try to make himself at home there; that he should be allowed to talk to Delia when he would. Meanwhile neither of them was to give the girl a hint of Lord Richard's wishes. As they gradually came to an agreement, Tom became more cheerful. He did not conceal his hopes that the absurdity of the whole thing would become clear to my friend. "See her as often as you like!" he said at last. "See her!" repeated Lord

Richard softly. "Ah!" cried the other again sharply, as if something hurt him, "what a fool I am! Forgive me and come as often as you can—and thank you." I do not know why he thanked him, but he spoke with deepest feeling. Tom is a strange being. It is my deliberate opinion that he was not in any sense eager that his daughter should marry Lord Richard. I believe that his want of enthusiasm in contemplating this brilliant future for his child was real. He is fantastic. If I wished to speak hardly of my own kin, I should say that he is little short of an idiot.

CHAPTER III.

THOUGH I freely confess that I was astounded by the discovery of my friend's new purpose, it needed but a few minutes' solitude to make his motives clear. After a few minutes of perplexity I again did justice to his extraordinary ability. I had found out long ago that story of his youth. I had made the acquaintance of the lady who had treated him badly. I had smiled often to myself at the thought of her chagrin; for the gallant boy whom she had thrown over was becoming a personage in the world, and the rich man whom she had married was unexpectedly chary of diamonds and ponies. Now if Lord Richard in his riper manhood made up his mind at last to take a wife, it was certainly wise of him to seek one who was naturally modest, and who had been brought up to expect little for herself, and to look after the younger children. The care and devotion of such a girl might be

bought by corals as easily as by diamonds. But of course no considerations of the sort would have occurred to my friend, had he not met with his great calamity. That much he had admitted, though with a graceful veil of sentiment, in his conversation with my cousin Tom. If to see clearly what is for one's good, and to lay firm hand upon it, be to be great, then my friend Lord Richard is a great man. A lightning flash strikes him blind; in a moment he has fixed upon the best substitute for his eyes; within twenty-four hours he has put every thing in motion to insure his success. What would be the value to him now of a fashionable woman with a heart given wholly to society, and with eyes for other men? He proposed to secure for himself a dear little modest maiden, who would ask no better fate than to devote herself to a great man and a member of the aristocracy. One mistake, however, even Lord Richard made. Even he must have overrated her gentleness. I confess that I overrated it. I have been rudely corrected. But—as the professional romancers say—to my story!

For some time after Lord Richard's sad accident I was assiduous in my attentions. Not only did his comparative helplessness and the claims of friendship make an appeal which I would not ignore for a moment; but I was eager also to see the conclusion of this little comedy—this skillfully managed idyl of the middle-aged statesman and the guileless suburban maiden. Moreover, I had my own part to play. I had determined at once to do all I could to further the marriage. It was the safest course. Even now, though the result has not agreed with my expectations, I can not see that I was wrong. If I had tried to hinder the match for the sake of my own influence with my friend, I should probably have failed. I knew Lord Richard's power. Even if I had succeeded in separating the ill-assorted couple, I could not have done it without creating such a coldness between my friend and myself, that our old familiar and delightful converse would have been impossible. How familiar—how easy it was! "What would you do without me?" I asked jocosely one day, when I had written a handful of notes from his dictation

of attendance had been many times refused, I saw that I was wasting my time. But I could not abandon my design. I must appear to Delia as an important agent in the business, or where would be my claim on her gratitude? I must see her, or how could I insinuate that she owed Lord Richard's attentions to my diplomatic management? I was determined to impress this view of myself upon my pretty cousin's mind. I made up my mind to see her without delay. Since my friend refused my arm as a guide to the presence of his beloved, I must go to her alone. It was certainly more difficult. I had allowed so long a time to elapse since my last visit to that tumble-down abode, where I spent so many happy days of boyhood, that I feared an attack of natural, and not unpardonable, shyness, when I knocked anew at that well-known but shabby door. However, I trusted to that tact which had never failed me yet.

Fate seemed to be against me. I made three journeys to my cousin's house at different hours of the day; and three times was I refused admittance. I began to think—incredible as it appeared—that the young woman who

had charge of the door had been ordered never to admit me. One day, being in a holiday humor, I determined to play my good cousins a trick. I felt that our old familiarity fully warranted so harmless a joke. I engaged a young waterman to scull me up with the tide ; I left the boat at the end of the lane which passes Tom's door ; and coming to the corner of the garden in a shady place, I mounted an old rickety iron railing and looked cautiously over the wall. A lofty row of sweet-peas was between me and the house. Smiling at the pleasant trick, which reminded me of boyish days in that happy garden, I slipped softly over the wall and dropped noiselessly down to the grass. The little garden was comically old-fashioned, and by no means well kept. Through the tangled wilderness of sweets I slipped like a serpent ; I remembered how I used to play at being a red Indian among those green paths and hedges. I just stopped myself in time. Two people were sitting on an old seat. Though one of them was blind, I knew the quickness of his ear ; I held my breath, and crouched low in the tangled grass.

Every word, every gesture remains engraven on my memory. I could not have moved to save my life. I was—as the novelists say—rooted to the spot. Luckily it was a spot whence through a tiny peep-hole in the yew hedge I could command a perfect view of the faces of the actors.

Lord Richard and my little cousin Delia were seated side by side on the old stone seat, which looked as if it might have come in its old age from the shadow of ilex trees in a villa garden of Rome. Even then the charm of the place and of the hour was not lost on me. But, in a moment, all my mind was busy with the strange pair before me. The first thing to be noted was the air of well-trying friendship which was common to the man of the world and to the young girl. They might have been friends for years. Delia was prattling like a child, as if she would amuse her companion; and yet with this childishness there was a little air of protection almost motherly, which was comical enough. She seemed to have taken charge of him. She went on talking, until it struck me that she was half

afraid to stop—afraid of what he might say in his turn. He for his part seemed in no hurry to speak. He sat with his face turned straight to the place where I lay (I could scarcely assure myself that he at least could not see me), and he listened to his pretty little comrade with that broad smile of contentment which was worth a king's ransom for its persuasion of simplicity. At last it seemed as if she could think of no more to say. She was silent, but the blush on her cheek grew deeper; she looked at him once or twice quickly, and as often turned away her face, as if she forgot that he could not see the pretty trouble in her lips and eyes. I had never seen my little cousin look so pretty. Ah, boyish fancies! Ah, memories of foolish childhood! What says the satirist? "Wait till you come to forty year." Lying there in the grass I remembered how I had tried to kiss Delia when I came home one summer day from school, and how in her pretty willfulness she had boxed my ears with that little sun-brown hand. How pretty she looked as she sat on that old gray, moss-stained seat! There was suppressed excitement in her face, and a look

in her eyes as if she was not far from tears. She must have known how pretty she looked ; probably some of the trouble in her face was due to the sad thought that this prettiness was wasted on the eligible suitor at her side.

There was a pause ; I seemed to hear the tiny insects in the air—almost to hear the beating of my heart. At last Delia moved, as if she could bear the silence no longer. He put out his hand with its new uncertain movement, and laid it on hers ; and yet he did not speak. At last with a great sigh, “ How I love you ! ” he said. It was splendidly done ; it was supremely effective. He must have felt the trembling of her hand, for he took his own great hand away, and laid it for a minute across his sightless eyes. “ I ought not to have said it. I ought not to have dreamed it. I ought not to have dreamed of laying this burden ”—and here he stopped short, as if something hindered his speech. It is an old, but an excellent effect. She said nothing ; but her little hand came trembling to his, which had fallen limp upon his knee. There was a light of pity in her face, which made it like an angel’s. If

he had been a rosy Cupidon, and she a Psyche newly awakened by love, she could not have looked more perfectly as if she doted on him. It was supremely feminine. No man could have thrown himself so utterly into the situation. At her touch, Lord Richard turned to look at her, and in an instant a cry came from him sharply—"Ah, God! I can not see her!" he cried. And now I could see that her eyes were full of tears; she bent her little brown head and kissed his big hand, and her tears fell on it. Then his face flushed with triumph: he had gained his end. He put out his arm toward her, where she was half withdrawn; and when he touched her soft brown hair, he drew her head against his stalwart shoulder. I was too late, and I knew it; they had played the little comedy without me.

It was an unlucky day for me. "What are you doing there?" I heard the fierce whisper close above my head, and a nervous hand was on my collar dragging me backward. It was Tom. It was an awkward situation. I had neither time nor breath for explanation. I returned to London full of melancholy thoughts.

I have forgiven both my friend and my cousin. What is the use of resentment? Lord Richard did not withdraw from me his political patronage. To his influence and that of his family I owed my seat for Mudbro'. As a public man I was worth propitiating. I may add that I have done no discredit to his choice. I flung myself heart and soul, if I may use the expression, into the strife of parties. By my own efforts and by a dextrous use of machinery of which I confess myself proud, I have gained for myself a place in which I am independent of all aristocratic patronage. I have made myself a free man, and, moreover, a rising one.

It is as a private individual that I can not but regard my friend and my friend's wife with a gentle regret, though without animosity. With neither Lord Richard nor Delia could I preserve a pleasant intercourse. It was no fault of mine; I was eager to be on the footing of a cousin in the house; but all my efforts to be cousinly were vain. The husband indeed received me with laughter—almost with roars of laughter; but the wife was so cold, that at last I could not ignore her show of disfavor. This

little lady, whom we had all thought so soft, was cold and hard as steel. I did not grudge her the victory which she had won. She had played her cards well. She was quite right to secure a husband whose blindness was more than compensated for by his high position and comparative wealth. If she could have been made to think that she owed her prize to me, things would have been different between us. As it was, if I were a vain man, I could not but attribute the attitude of hostility which she preserved toward me, to some lurking resentment at the ease with which I had stifled my boyish fancy for her. The strange prejudices of women are often to be explained by pique.

Of my cousin Tom—Heaven help him!—I have seen little. I met him once not long after the marriage; and as he spoke to me of the happiness of his little girl I saw real tears in his eyes. As I believe that he was originally by no means eager for the match, so too do I believe that he now regards it with the warmest sympathy as a love match on both sides. I could almost envy my cousin's unique simplicity. Poor Tom!

MY POOR WIFE

CHAPTER I.

“IF every word were the stroke of a cutting whip, it might ease my heart to write of this pitiful scoundrel. I know I have no power of writing; and if I had such power, I should not hope to persuade the world. To the world he seems a patriot, an honest man, and, God help me! a sorrowful widower. I know he killed his wife. I know that he killed her as surely as if he had driven a knife into the best and purest heart of all the hearts of women. Perhaps it is she who checks my hand now. It is all that is left for me, to believe that she knows my thoughts, and that she knows too my great love for her. Oh, my darling!—oh, my darling! that you ever fancied that you cared for this vile man! Is not that enough to keep him safe from me? For him, what good is it to abuse him? He would feel my fingers on his throat, but noth-

ing less. Oh, my love, my darling, that was this man's wife!"

These words I found on a piece of paper which I picked up on the very grave of my poor wife. Of the pain which they caused me in those early days of my sorrow I need say nothing. I have quoted them here because they explain, better than I could, why I have determined to publish this brief record of my married life, which was, alas! almost as brief. It will be easily believed how painful is this task to me. It is not only that I reopen a recent wound, but also that I am compelled to raise the curtain which shaded from the world my short domestic life. A public man must become somewhat thick-skinned; but to one originally sensitive beyond his fellows, what can be more painful than to drag into the light of day the tender secrets of his hearth and home? And yet it will be readily understood that I have no other course. The savage words which head this chapter may be amplified at any moment, and published as a libellous attack upon my personal character. It is true that the writer, my poor wife's cousin, after dese-

crating the very churchyard with his deplorable violence, has taken himself back to his savage life in the far West, to his cattle and his horses, his bowie-knives and revolvers. But there is no safety for me in his absence. Every morning I fear the appearance of some pamphlet, or of some anonymous attack—the true assassin's weapon—in the Press. Thus I am driven slowly against my will, to anticipate the blow. I shall use all possible delicacy. I shall name no names. But those who watch my career will understand me and believe me ; and if the attack be made, I shall be able to point to this brief record, and ask a just and generous public to judge between its temperate statement of facts and the shocking fury of the unhappy young man whose awful words I have quoted.

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something,
nothing;

'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thou-
sands ;

But he who filches from me my good name, etc.

It is in defense of my good name that I pen
these pages.

A few years ago (it is sad to think how few), when I was conducting that successful campaign, which, by gaining for me my present seat in the House, relieved me forever from the patronage of a political family, I was attacked by a local magnate with a vehemence which I shall never forget. He not only found fault with the party to which I am devoted, but he went so far as to accuse me personally in no ambiguous phrases of insincerity and ingratitude. He was popular with his brother sportsmen and with his brother magistrates, but he was a dull fellow. Long ere this he has forgotten that he attacked me: the next day's hunting or the next poaching case must have driven it clean out of his memory; yet I confess that his words stung me. Unjust as they were, I could not forget them. These stupid men, when they are unaccustomed to making speeches, are apt to be brutally frank in their public utterances. Polite enough in private life, they blunder into strong language on the platform. The arts of insinuation and covert satire which we study are to them unknown. They blurt out their crude, coarse charges. But it is enough to

say that my opponent used the plainest language, and that I, not unnaturally, was stung by it. Of course I showed no sign of my annoyance. I passed by his words with the slightest allusion, the lightest jest ; but none the less I confess that I was hurt, and with the pugnacity of a Briton I looked for a chance of returning the blow.

Now, it happened that I heard something, when I was canvassing the neighborhood, of a claim to some part of my opponent's property. As the claimant had not moved in the matter it seemed unlikely that he had any valid grounds. It was only my habit of noting trifles, even though they seem of no importance, which placed this weapon in my hand. I expected but little from the inquiries, which I made carelessly enough ; but I found more than I hoped. The apathy of the claimant, who was a stranger to me, seemed from all accounts to be due less to the weakness of his case than to a pride which approached mania. He enjoyed the reputation of harmless eccentricity ; it seemed likely that he enjoyed his grievance. He had never shown a sign of moving in the matter ;

perhaps he feared that he should lose his grievance and gain nothing more tangible. As soon as I was convinced that the claim against my opponent was not a mere delusion, I transferred the task of private inquiry to a lawyer whom I could trust. He is not my own lawyer, but is one who has his own reasons for keeping me his friend ; he has been of service to me on several occasions. He did not keep me long in doubt and his conclusion was eminently satisfactory. He was convinced of the justice of the claim. I had been working hard at a dull mass of statistics ; I felt that I needed a holiday. I determined to combine business with pleasure. I wrote to the eccentric claimant. I announced that I was going into the southern country where he lived, for a brief period of repose, and I begged that I might call upon him. I explained my strange request by telling him that a legal acquaintance, who gave some part of his time to examining obscure claims to landed property, had called my attention to a case of gross injustice ; that as a public man it was my constant wish to remedy injustice where I could ; that if he would listen to me for an hour or

two I felt sure of convincing him that he was entitled to a small but valuable estate which I named. I ended my letter with sincere apologies for intruding on a stranger my offers of assistance. In answer to mine I received by return of post a most courteous, if somewhat old-fashioned, epistle, in which the writer, after a graceful reference to my public character and to my gratuitous labors in the cause of justice, begged that I would make his house my home during my sojourn in the country where he had been born and bred. On the next day I wrote a few lines of acknowledgment and acceptance, and on the next I followed my letter.

Never shall I forget my first view of the old house. I can see it now as I saw it then. It all comes back to me in my more tender moments. I little knew, as I looked with a gentle pleasure on its venerable and quiet front, that it held the woman who was to be so much to me. Good had it been for me had I compelled the driver beside me to turn his dog-cart from that hospitable door. And yet how one lingers over this checkered landscape, this brief time of smiles and tears! Though I know that

I made a great mistake, how can I resist a feeling of melancholy, which is not wholly sad, as I recall those golden hours which filled the fateful days? One may recall the errors of love with a smile which is not far from tears. As I muse, the old house is clear to me again as on that autumn afternoon. I can see the old stone front, more dignified than spacious, mellowed by time, and yellowed here and there by tiny, close, bright lichen; the broad steps leading to the open doors, the great stone ball on either hand, the stiff stone balustrade which bounds the unseen roof. Spreading over the wide space on the right of the door is plentiful ivy; on the left the Virginia creeper glows with the richest of autumn color. Where the balustrade is cut in the center by a stone peak a young ash had forced itself, and like a stout young sapling, reared its slender length defiantly. This twig on the edge of the roof, the ivy which grows quick and luxuriant in that soft air, the wide-spread creeper, and the stains of yellow growth upon the stone, suggested to the fanciful mind that Nature had taken the place under her special charge. I am devoted

to Nature. Nothing affords me such repose as to turn from the strife of parties to that eternal peace. I marked the details of the scene that I might refresh myself in future days. I paused a moment on the lower step that I might feel the soft autumnal sunlight, which embraced the long stone front from end to end. Some cows were feeding in the long grass before the house; a small hen fluttered anxiously up the steps before me, and, as I followed her, her small brood of chickens hurried out from the uncarpeted hall within and stopped irresolute before me. Smiling at the rustic charm of the whole, with a mind singularly free from all anxiety, I laid my hand upon the bell.

The sound of the bell was almost startling in that quiet time, but scarcely had it broken the afternoon slumber of the house when a door opened on my right, and my host came hurrying into the hall. My first impression was that the little old gentleman must have been a pretty boy; he was slightly and rather delicately made, and wore the every-day dress of a country gentleman with an almost exces-

sive neatness. My second impression was of his suppressed nervousness. When you think that a man is hiding something from you, it is well to look at the corners of his mouth and at the tips of his fingers. The eyes of an impostor will confront yours in most cases without a quiver. The eyes of my host showed nothing but recognition and welcome; but the hand which he held out trembled as I delayed an instant to grasp it, and there was an unnaturally fixed look about his lips. As he began to speak his mouth was tremulous. I knew that he was making an effort to control his feelings. He was determined to show no eagerness. He began to talk quickly of other matters, and to ask questions about my journey. He was persistent in his offers of refreshment; he was fussy in his directions to his servant about my luggage.

When I had humored the pride of my new friend for a little while (I could hardly help thinking of him as of a spoiled child), I turned rather abruptly to the object of my mission. Even then he was eager to interrupt me with suggestions of indifference. "It can make

little difference to me," he said; and, a little later, "I have never cared to move in the matter." "It was for my kinsman to resign it," he said, with some warmth, when I expressed surprise at his patience; "after our family quarrel it was of course impossible for me to make secret inquiries into his title." With such fantastic reasons did he interrupt me, as I quietly and gravely impressed upon him my conviction that he had suffered great injustice; and all the while I was as certain as I was certain of my own identity that I had roused him to the keenest excitement. At last he broke into a high nervous laugh, and laid his hand on my arm. We were still walking up and down before the door, and his nervous grasp seemed to direct my attention to the road below us. "If I care at all about it, that's why," he said, almost incoherently. I looked and saw his daughter. How can I describe her? And yet, if I do not describe her, this brief account which I am compelled to write, will be meaningless. I can not help hoping that this record, which is so painful to me, may not only anticipate a dastardly blow aimed at my character,

but may also convey some warning to rash and ardent youth. Where the cautious and prudent err so sadly in their arrangements for domestic happiness, how shall the headstrong and perfervid hope to succeed?

The poor child had been running in the meadow with her dog, and had stopped short at sight of us; she had more color than usual; she stood with her hand dropped in light restraint on the collie's head; her eyes looked frankly up to mine; she was exquisitely beautiful. The thick fair hair, which was cut short for ease, and did not reach her shoulders, was neither straight nor curly, but every lock seemed ready to curl; it gave an added delicacy to her delicate face, and made her look younger than she was. Her figure, too, with all its freedom and grace of movement, kept something of the awkwardness of the growing girl—an awkwardness which has its own charm. She might have been the youngest of the nymphs of Artemis; and even her country-made gown seemed to my fanciful eyes to take the air of virgin draperies. Poor child! It is sad enough for me to recall that presence full

of the very spirit of the innocent country. The description which I have tried to give is more detailed than I should have attempted on that first day of our meeting. Then, though I felt the charm, I saw little else than the eyes upturned to mine—eyes wide apart and gray and grave, but, more than all, remarkable for their alertness. They seemed like the eyes of one who awaits command. I remember that I fancifully compared their look to that of a little angel ready and very eager to do the Divine bidding. She reminded me of a face seen on a church window. When I knew the face better I gradually lost my impression of this alert look, but at first it was always with me; and now I sometimes see it, as I saw it at first in those grave open eyes which came to mine in the light of that autumn afternoon. Before we had spoken to each other, the dog began to growl—I don't like collies—and the charm was broken.

CHAPTER II.

DAY followed day in that simple but agreeable home, and each new day was sweeter than the last. I never felt better; I knew that my holiday was doing me good. I gave a few hours to business talk with my host, and to the examination of necessary papers; and for the rest I resigned myself to tranquil happiness. I determined to breathe deep the spirit of the place and of the time. It is a peaceful country. The wide grass valley slopes upward into broad grass downs; and between these gentle hills, small woods creep down into hollows where villages nestle. Here and there is a field of roots which are growing for the sheep to eat; every where is the tinkle of sheep-bells. If in the morning you open a gate in the lane, you will find it open at eventide. Few men are on the road. You may walk for hours and see nobody but a couple of stone-breakers, a hedger with a wire hidden in his pocket, a

farmer looking for a hare. The sign-posts are green and meaningless: they are of use to nobody but the rook, who perches and explores the cracks; at last they fall, or are helped to fall, and so go to warm the laborer's cottage. In my wanderings in this drowsy land, and in my search for new force, what more natural guide could I find than my host's fair daughter? She was never tired, for all her delicate face and her slight figure. She could vault over a fence like a boy, and run lightly and nimbly. Her quick eyes saw every thing in hedge or ditch or sky. She was like a boy: the thick hair standing away from the slender neck, the wide brow, fine cheeks, and pointed chin, made her look like some deft Italian page from an old picture. She was like a boy; and yet she was more like a young angel on a church window, an angel who looked grave, and was ready for action, and waited. I can not tell when I began to think that she might wait for me: that it would be a keen delight to see those eyes look grave and trustful for my commands: that I might mold this supple creature to my will. At first I dallied with the

idea, and found a new delightful luxury. I knew my weakness, my sensibility to refined pleasures. It is too late now. I made a great mistake. I might have ruined my life beyond repair. In this brief record I shall not attempt to explain away my error.

At least, I have not to blame myself for undue haste. Even when I had fairly faced the idea of making this beautiful girl my own, I delayed and doubted. I forced myself to assume an impartial position. Cool as I was, I could not long be uncertain of her feeling for me. Though she was not aware of it herself, I knew that she loved me. I am no fop ; I have never considered myself as eminently attractive in the eyes of women : though I am not ill-looking, I know well that a rougher style has a more wide success with the gentle sex. And yet I could not blind myself to the affection of this beautiful child. Her eyes sought mine for guidance, and betrayed their love. She was only happy as my companion. The motherless girl had given all her love to the father, who was almost an old man at her birth. As soon as she could think about him, she had found

that he needed her loving care ; and her daughter's affection had something of a mother's responsibility. She was not blind—though she would have been wretched had she guessed that I detected her clear sight—to her father's weakness and foolish pride. Was it to be wondered at, then, that she gave her innocent heart to the man who came to her dear one's rescue, and awakened him from a lethargy of discontent to new hope—even to the certainty of victory? Slowly I led her to ask questions about myself ; and, while I told her little, I made her show me, in her sweet simplicity, what manner of man she took me to be. Is there any thing more intoxicating for the fighter in life's battle than to find himself appreciated by one innocent and beautiful soul, whom the world has had no chance to mar? I at least can imagine no more subtle poison. In her eyes I was a born leader of men. Buried in that obscure corner of England, she had never seen a man whose name is in the papers. She knew nothing of the grades of public men. She regarded me as already a leader of the party, as one of the rulers of the country. From my lofty place she had

seen me step down to do an act of justice. My brief holiday, snatched from the service of the State, was devoted to the cause of an injured old man, whom a heartless world had left to pine in an obscure corner of the land. No wonder that I read in her eyes the old sweet tale which Cophetua saw in the eyes of the beggar-maid. She loved me.

Did I love her? Ought I to permit myself to love her? I determined to be deaf to the sound of my heart, and to listen to reason only. Only thus can a man see clearly the path of duty when a woman is by the wayside. In my conduct to the other sex there is little with which I need blame myself. Since my boyish days, when I made love to a pretty cousin in an old suburban garden, I had pretended to no serious devotion. Women had been to me an agreeable accident of life, a soothing influence, a refreshment. I had never allowed them to divert me from my appointed work. When little more than a boy, I had come to a fixed resolution on the marriage question. I would not think of it till I had reached a certain position in the career before me; and then I would

only permit myself this luxury under certain conditions. I am not a mercenary man ; but I knew well that I must not marry a penniless wife. As a bachelor I was so far wealthy that I could give all my attention to party management and to public affairs. As the husband of a woman who brought me nothing, I should have to give half my energy and half my time to my private business.

To such a narrowing of my life it was my duty not to yield. I had reconciled myself early to my duty. But now the constant presence of this lovely girl forced me to review my position with more anxiety. I could not tell if she had any thing. Of course, I might infer that she would inherit the bulk of the property of her father ; and I was now almost confident that her father would be made a richer man by my interference ; and, moreover, he was old. Still I could not afford to speak. This man who was in possession might fight the case with the same robust energy which he had directed against me ; and I knew enough of the uncertainty and delay of English law to know that the claimant's money

might be wasted in the struggle, and the victory remain with the wrong-doer. Besides, there might be other claims on my friend of which the world knew nothing. One can never be sure of these respectable old gentlemen who live lonely lives in the country. But if I could be sure that my wife would have a fortune equal to my own (and I asked no more), I felt sure that this was the wife for me. I foresaw a brilliant social success as the complement of my political progress. She was so beautiful, and so uncommon, that a jaded society would welcome her with rapture. Men would rave about her, and she remain as good and true as when she ran with her dog in the meadows. This dog was, indeed, the only drawback which I could see. She and her collie were inseparable. I have never liked collies ; they always appear to me a treacherous class of creatures. This particular dog was positively hateful to me, and he seemed to like me as little. But though it was unpleasant to have a wolf-like animal prowling about one's steps, he was scarcely to be regarded as a serious bar to matrimony. And he was the only bar. If men

were likely to rave about my young wife, I counted with even more security on the kindly patronage of the most influential women. She was so young, so beautiful, so innocent, and with manners of such natural refinement, that she must appeal to great ladies of varied experience with an irresistible charm. Then I thought, too, that with all her simplicity she would soon learn to play her part in this new world ; that the same eyes which were so quick in observation of bird and beast and flower would not be slow to understand the men and women who were so far more interesting. I was wrong here—I confess it ; but was it not a natural mistake ? Perhaps one is wrong to prophesy about women : they are strange creatures, as many wise men have discovered. Shall not even the most sober of us feel a tremor of the blood, and delirious certainty that all must turn to good when he dreams of youth and innocence and love—and all for him ? Am I to be blamed if I credited this beautiful girl with a cleverness which was not hers ?

Nothing hindered me from laying bare my whole heart but the uncertainty of the money

I ought not to speak
 of the money; but it was
 so hard
 to be absent myself for
 this absence test
 but I could also
 the financial posi-
 tion. I went to the same lawyer
 who had acted for me in this matter; I
 went to the first audience about the claim,
 what I had gathered on the spot; and I told
 him of the state of our client's affairs,
 and if there were any other secret claims upon
 him. Having written this important letter, I
 announced my immediate departure. If I had
 been doubtful of the girl's feelings I should
 have doubted no longer. When I said, with
 some proper expressions of regret, that I must
 go away on the morrow, her delicate cheek
 grew suddenly paler, and her eyes seemed to
 grow greater with wonder and sorrow. Lest I
 should betray my feelings, I hurried away to
 pack my portmanteau.

The next morning every thing was ready
 for my departure, but I had still time to

spare. As I came slowly down the old oak staircase I was in an autumnal mood, which suited well the stillness and the beauty of the day. The clear October weather showed no sign of change; day after day, when the early mist had melted, the sun shone temperate on golden and red leaf unstirred by any breeze. I remember that I tasted the melancholy of the declining year with a tranquil pleasure as I stepped noiselessly down the old staircase. The windows at the back of the house, where the stone is even more mellow and lovely than in front, are high, and all divided into little diamond panes. Across one of these windows the staircase runs, and there is an oak bar so placed that it seems to invite the idle man to lean and look into the garden below. I did not resist the invitation; I knew that I had plenty of time; I leaned and looked. This little old-fashioned garden was very delightful. It was not well kept, but perhaps it seemed all the more luxuriant on that account. It was full of old-fashioned flowers, of old fashioned perfumes. It nestled in the angle made by the house and some lower buildings, and all the morning it

held the sunlight like a cup. Hives stood against the warm stone wall, and bees went in and out with their murmur of drowsy industry. Nothing could be more peaceful; I sighed—not sadly—as I leaned on the oaken bar. But I had scarcely looked down into the sweet familiar garden before I saw that my little girl was there, and somebody else beside her. For an instant my tranquil mood was crossed by a spasm of disgust. Then I gave all my attention to watching the demeanor of the pair. What a memory I have! Every gesture, every look, though they would have seemed to most people unimportant enough, remains engraven on my memory.

The newcomer had the advantage of youth and of a certain kind of beauty. I will write of him with strict impartiality. If I can put aside my love in estimating a woman, I can put aside my just dislike in drawing the picture of a man who has injured me. He is tall and dark, with quick impulsive movements, and black eyes which can look both fierce and tender. I hope he may never in those wild lands, where he elects to live, be tempted to any sudden act

of fury and revenge. There is something untamable in his air, something which has led me at moments to suspect some taint of insanity. Perhaps this is the most charitable explanation of his conduct to me; and I wish to be charitable. There was something, too, in his Southern tints and his sudden passions which suggested a taint of negro blood. I found out that his mother was 'a creole, or some such thing; and a suspicion of the tar-brush is probable, if not certain. Still the young man had a certain beauty, though in spite of his arched feet and lithe, active figure it was accompanied by no air of breeding. It needed but a single glance into that sunny garden to show me that this dusky youth was passionately in love with the fair girl whom I had almost destined for myself. How eagerly did my eyes turn from his speaking looks to his gentle companion! If I had read there acceptance of this suitor's ardent passion, I should have gone away and returned no more. Women are such strange creatures, that my faith in this girl's love for me had tottered as I looked at this undoubted rival. But when I turned my eyes to her fair

face, it was like an open book to me, and therein I read not only that she did not love this young man, but that she was unconscious of his passion. I do not hesitate to confess that I felt a thrill of triumph, as I was sure that her affection for me blinded her to this obvious devotion of another. Where I stood by the open window their voices came up to me from the garden. She said little, but wandered rather listlessly on the narrow unweeded path, stooping now and then to pick a lingering flower, and hugging whenever she stooped, the rough head of her dog, who seemed to grin with satisfaction. But as her companion followed her slowly he talked more than enough. He said no word of love—it was only his looks which betrayed that; but he talked of his wild cattle-lifting or cattle-breeding life in the Western plains; of long rides; of bears and Indians; of camping in the Rockies. It was poor stuff to listen to, and had an air of braggadocia, which I hoped would not escape the fair young listener. I was pleased that she seemed absent; I thought that she was thinking of the hour of my going away. The young man was gaitered

and spurred and splashed. As she gave small heed to him, he said something suddenly of his hope of riding over again, vaulted the railings, and disappeared. She stood looking after him with a little smile half lighting the sadness of the face. I could not be deceiving myself: the face was paler than usual, and sad for my departure. She smiled at his abruptness, and then she sighed; I knew that the sigh was for me. If I had obeyed my inclination, I should have gone down into the sun-steeped garden, and kissed the little pale face. But I was master of my feelings; I went slowly down the rest of the staircase, and going out of the front door betook myself to the stables to make sure of the readiness of the dog-cart. A little later I stood on the wide stone steps and said good-by. My host was fussing about the luggage, and divided between his wish to detain me and his fear lest I should miss the train. He had made up his mind to inform his kinsman's lawyer of his new movement in the matter of the property. He had assured me again and again that he could not work longer in the dark. I no longer discouraged him from publishing the

affair; it had become most important to me that his prospects should be clearly defined as soon as possible. While he was half holding me back, half pushing me down the steps, his daughter stood silent beside him. Suddenly, without a word, but with a quick faint blush, she held out to me the few flowers which I had seen her gather in the old garden. The shadow of coming winter was on them; but she had picked them for me. I held the little hand a moment in mine, and looked into the honest tell-tale eyes. "I shall come back," I said, with much intention in my voice.

How true it is that man should trust no seeming gift of fortune! In his own care and prudence let him confide as much as he will; but when he seems most lucky let him take heed. To such thoughts as these I slide, whether I will or no, when I recall this sweet romantic time. Every thing seemed to turn out so well that my heart swelled sometimes with all the arrogance of a favorite of fortune. Of course I smiled at my folly, and calmed the tumult of my feelings; but something of the

baseless confidence remained ; I felt like a spoiled child. Every thing seemed to turn out so well. This claim on my opponent's property, which I had thought it hardly worth while to examine, now seemed to me unanswerable. The one girl who had profoundly affected my heart was probably an heiress ; and I could not shut my eyes to the fact that she loved me. The lawyer whom I employed and my lesser agents were serving me with unusual dexterity and success. When, after an interval much shorter than I had dared to hope, I received a letter from my late host, who informed me that his kinsman would give up the property in question without a struggle, I almost danced for joy of my brilliant victory. My opponent—the man who had attacked me so crudely, clumsily mixing disapproval of my public career with criticism of my private position—my opponent had made no fight at all. He had scarcely allowed himself time to go through the evidence with his lawyer, when he wrote to the claimant a letter full of extravagant regrets that he had enjoyed even for an hour a property which rightly belonged

to another. His protestations were overdone. He declared that though he had been told, on coming into possession, that there was a claim on some part of the estate, he had been content to leave every thing to the family lawyer, confident that if there were any grounds for the claim the claimant would soon move in the matter. He almost abused the old gentleman, of whose peculiar pride and nervousness he had clearly no notion for remaining passive so long. He suggested compensation. It seemed that there was nothing which he was not willing to do. On the whole, though the letter was over-colored, it gave me a higher idea of the writer's ability. He was clever enough to see that he had no case, and to come down with grace.

Every thing seemed to fall out as I wished. When I had finished the perusal of my late host's characteristic letter, in which his elation was but poorly concealed by phrases studiously cool and conventional allusions to the indifference of old age, and when I had read with even more attention my opponent's impulsive epistle, which had been forwarded to me in the

same envelope, I leaped to my feet with the determination to be bold. One must risk something. I would not wait for absolute certainty. I had been making indirect inquiries, and I could hear nothing to the claimant's disadvantage. His neighbors believed him to be over-scrupulous and over-sensitive ; there had never been even a rumor of scandal connected with him ; there was not the faintest suspicion of any claim upon him, save that of his dear little girl ; it was supposed as a matter of course that he would leave her every thing. I would not wait for certainty. One must know how to dare. I determined to be bold. I would hasten to congratulate my friend in person ; I would listen to my heart, and see the girl I loved ; I would trust to myself to secure a fair settlement before my wedding day. For the rest, I would take the plunge without further premeditation. As I stood there with the old man's letters in my hand, and my heart beating, I felt like a romantic boy. The grand old words of Montrose were ringing in my ears. I would put it to the touch ; I was ready "to win or lose it all ;" I would greatly dare.

Not yet did Fortune seem weary of showering her gifts upon me. I had established myself comfortably in my favorite corner of the railway carriage, with my plaid about my knees, a little pile of newspapers by my side, and my mind full of thoughts of the dear girl who was awaiting me. I was congratulating myself on my solitude, for I wished to taste the luxury of sentimental dreams; the train was already in motion, when the door was pulled violently open and a young man stumbled into the compartment. As he steadied himself and dropped into his seat, I recognized the dusky youth whom I had seen in the garden with my beloved. Though I had seen him from that pleasant window on the stairs, I knew that he had not seen me. I no longer resented his headlong intrusion, nor sighed for my lost solitude; I saw my chance in a moment of gaining some further information. I could hardly help laughing at this new gift of Fortune; it seemed as if the fickle goddess had thrown in this lithe mulatto, or creole, or whatever he is, like the last of a baker's dozen.

It needed no skill to get into conversation

with my companion. With a quick grin, which showed his white teeth (it is likely enough that the contrast between his dark skin and that gleaming row had been admired by women), he apologized for his sudden entry. I joined in his laughter; I made some light allusion to the weather; I expressed a hope that I should still find bright autumnal weather in the place whither I was bound; and, having thus named the village near which my host lived, I asked the young man if by chance he knew that part of the world. "Know it!" he cried; "I know every brick of that village; I was born there; my mother's house is not a stone's throw from it." "Then you must know a friend of mine," I said, smiling; and I named my host. It needed but that name to open the flood-gates. The young man's black eyes shone, and his dusky cheek was flushed, as he rushed into a eulogy on his friend. One would have thought that there had never been so honorable, so high-minded an old gentleman. I deprecated with much good humor this excessive praise, and thus easily

induced my companion to be more explicit. He told me half a dozen stories of my host's kindness to his poorer neighbors. With an assumption of cynicism, I hinted that the kindness of landlords had been sometimes a little too great—a little harmful. At this my friend blazed into indignation. He told me with excessive emphasis that this old gentleman's life from the hour of his birth had been as open as his Bible; that for simple piety he stood alone; that in all the gossip of the country-side, which he, my informant, knew from the first word to the last, there had never been a whisper against this remarkable old man. I hastened to apologize for my cynical tone; to assure him that I shared to the full his good opinion of our common friend; that it did my heart good to hear him praised so warmly. Indeed, I spoke with warmth. I was truly glad to hold so high an opinion of the old gentleman, and my belief that he had no secret claims upon his purse was increased almost to certainty.

Suddenly a thought seemed to strike my impulsive companion, who had been regarding me

with a straightforward stare which was almost embarrassing. "You can't be Mr. ——?" he said, naming me. "Yes, I can," I answered lightly, for of course further disguise was impossible. He stared at me a full minute more, until I laughed nervously. Then, with a quick movement, as if he flung some doubt from him, he stretched out his hand to me. "You must let me thank you for my old friend's sake." I spoke lightly of the service which I had rendered the old gentleman. "No, no," he cried; "it was nobly done; it was a fine thing; and from a stranger. If you had known him, of course you could not have helped helping him." Then, with his enthusiasm growing warmer as he spoke, he went on more quickly, "But you had never seen them; that's what makes it great. I am so angry with myself for not having looked into that claim; I had known of it all my life, but I was brought up to think it a mere delusion of the dear old man; I can hardly help hating you for having done it." I held up my hand in deprecation. "If you had known them," he began again—"but you had never seen them" (he had the air of bringing up my virtues

as accusations against me)—“you had never seen her.” He gave a long whistle, as if a sigh went out in it. “You had never seen her,” he repeated more slowly; “you did not know what an honor it was to do the least thing for her. She’s an angel.” “You speak with enthusiasm,” I said, smiling. “Oh, I’ve been in love with her,” he cried out, carelessly, “ever since I could see.”

Now, though I had recognized this young man’s feeling when I saw him with my little girl in the garden, I confess that I experienced a painful thrill when I heard him proclaim his love. It was with difficulty that I preserved the smile with which I listened to him. As I said nothing, he presently spoke again, and spoke more quietly. “Of course you won’t betray me,” he said. “Of course she knows nothing of this; and she won’t know till I’ve made my pile in Montana. You see I’ve nothing yet, except a few beasts; and she’ll have money—why, she’ll be almost an heiress now—thanks to you.”

“Does she inherit?” I asked carelessly.

“How can she help it?” he asked dismally;

“he hasn’t another near relation in the world, and he’d give her his last penny to-morrow if she asked him! If she asked him! As if she’d ever ask for any thing in the world, except his love—and that she has without asking—and the love of all the world if she looked at it.” Then he became silent. I took up a paper, and held it before me, as I thought. After a time I picked up the talk again by asking him some questions about cattle-breeding in America. He was full of confidence; he scarcely saw the risks for the profits; he was sure that a few more years like the last would make a man of him. He explained to me that he should not stay in America till he had made a fortune, but that he should come back to England as soon as he had saved a small capital. “Before I go back now,” he said, “I shall speak to the dear old man, and show him my position, and tell him that I shall come back to her; and if he lets me, I shall say a word to her—just a word of hope——” Here he stopped so long that I thought he had no more to say; but after a time he said slowly and with emphasis, as if he were talking seriously to himself, “And

yet I swear, if I were not going so far away, I'd rather not say a word of love to her yet. It seems like breaking into a shrine." I suppose that I could not restrain some movement of surprise, for he turned short upon me. "You don't know what innocence is," he cried; "nobody does who isn't her friend—oh yes! of course, all girls are innocent; but she—she hasn't a thought nor a dream that isn't pure; and she loves me as if I were her dog, or a flower in her garden—and I wish I were."

Fancy a sane young man talking like that in a railway train, and to a stranger! I could quote more of his wild speeches if it were worth while: my memory is really extraordinary—I can't forget (alas!) even when I would. One thing became clear to me as I traveled with my wild companion. He was the very last man to whom the happiness of a young girl should be confided. It seemed the most charitable conclusion that his brain was not quite right. I thought of the dear child who waited for me at my journey's end with a spasm of fear. At all risks I must save her from linking her lot with a madman. Even if he could not

be called mad, he was clearly so flighty and so unstable that he was unfit to take care of a wife. It is not restless youth, with fierce and tender eyes and olive skins, who make fortunes by the dull methodical business of cattle-breeding. Surely such men are not constant even in their love. They can not resist the temptation of women's eyes; and though there was to me something un-English and panther-like in the appearance of this impulsive being, I could suppose that women admired him. When we had reached the familiar station, he swung himself from the carriage, and immediately leaped into it again that he might help me with my lighter luggage. He seemed eager to conciliate me; he had good reason for trying to secure my friendship. "Good-by," he said; "I shall see you before you leave them; I shall ride over as soon as my mother will let me. My mother has the first claim on her prodigal; but I shall come as soon as I can." He spoke of his mother like the hero of a French drama; it was part of that want of reserve which was so unpleasant to me. Nevertheless, civility demanded that I should be polite; I thanked

him for his companionship and courtesy, and expressed my hope that we should meet again soon. He wrung my hand fiercely, and climbed quickly into the shabby old dog-cart which awaited him. He flourished his whip, and with some cry to me which I did not understand, drove quickly away.

CHAPTER III.

IT was clear that no time was to be lost. If I would secure the prize, I must close my ears to the voice of prudence. The unasked confidences of my traveling companion had strengthened my belief that my marriage would not be an imprudent one even from a money point of view ; I must be content with this probability ; there was no time for further inquiry. Who could prophesy the next move of this wild youth ? On the very next day he might come galloping over, and, forgetting all his fine determination of speaking to the girl's father, fling himself on his knees on the gravel path before the girl herself. His talk about the girl's extraordinary simplicity I dismissed with a smile. That was my error. I confess my mistake. I ought to have read between his fantastic speeches the truth of the poor child's ignorance of life and inability to understand its intricacies. I confess my mistake

when it is too late ; but I can not bear to linger over it. I have not the heart to moralize on this sad error, which might have ruined my career. Let love plead for me ! Let it suffice that I made up my mind to speak, and to speak on that very evening.

Though my mind was full of my purpose, I could not help smiling at the eccentricity of my host. It was not far from dinner-time when I reached the old house, and I found the old gentleman alone. I took it as no bad sign that his daughter did not come to meet me ; I put it down justly enough to the shyness with which new feeling had inspired her ; my fancy was busy with her sweet bashfulness. But my host gave me little leisure for dreams. He still kept up the little comedy of philosophic indifference to his good fortune, but was bothered by the fear that I should mistake his indifference for ingratitude. He fluttered about me with fussy little attentions. He pressed my hand again and again in both of his ; he insisted on accompanying me to my room, and himself lighted my candles. He pointed with a pride, at which he made haste to laugh, to

the fact that even at that time of year they could provide me with flowers for my mantel-piece. I did not need to be told whose little hands had placed them there. But though I smiled not unkindly at the old gentleman's eccentricities, I did not feel inclined to laugh, until we entered the dining-room. There the climax of absurdity was reached; for over the old sideboard was a sort of trophy erected, with FIAT JUSTITIA written large like a church decoration, and a trite old proverb in honor of helpful friends. Luckily, it was easy to explain my laughter as the result of surprise and modesty acting on the nerves. We were only three at dinner, not counting the beast of a dog; and neither of my human companions was in a mood to be critical of me. My public life had brought me in contact with the strange decorations of platforms and halls; but to find them rivaled in the old-fashioned oak-paneled dining-room of private life was irresistibly comical.

When dinner was done the dear child left us. The squire, though he cared little for wine, respected the old custom of sitting with the decanters; and on this occasion for the first

time I was glad of it. I should have liked to delay my communication; but the thought of the wild youth in the neighborhood made silence impossible. As briefly and as simply as I could I told the old gentleman of my love.

"You must have seen it," I said, as I noticed the trembling of his hands.

"Yes, yes," he answered, "of course I saw it; I saw it—I saw something." I was doubtful of the strict accuracy of this statement, as I marked the nervous flutter which he could not hide. "But she's a child," he cried rather sharply; "she's a child, you know."

"And you have not seen," I said sadly, "that lately—only lately—the child has been growing into a woman?"

"No," he answered, "no, no, no."

"At least," I asked, with a faint tone of injury in my voice, "at least I may hope that you have no personal objection to me?" He laid a rather shaky hand upon my sleeve, as if he would beg me to say no more till he had found his voice again.

"You must know what I think of you," he said, "how highly, how very highly!" As I

said nothing, he began again presently, with a watery smile—"It has given me a higher idea of political life than I have held since my salad days, to know that you are a rising man, that you will be a great man, a leader, a——"

"Put that on one side," I said, promptly; "don't consider that; it's a risky career; a man's scruples may make him a failure at any time."

"Ah, but it's not your ability—your great ability—that I think most of: it's your goodness. You are a good man, and a good friend, and a good friend to justice." He turned himself half round in his chair, that he might look at the trophy over the sideboard. I was afraid to look at it.

"Put that on one side," I said, with becoming gravity. He turned to me again with his nervous excitement growing stronger. "How can I refuse you?" he cried sharply. "How can I refuse you any thing? Think what you've done for me." I made a gesture of deprecation. "Of course," he went on, hurrying back to his familiar line, "it can't be much to me—I'm an old man—a little property

more or less; but that's nothing. You behaved nobly, with a rare nobility. I can't forget how deeply I am in your debt."

"Ah," I said, "you must put that on one side too."

"I can't put every thing on one side," he said rather feebly. I made no comment; I made no claim upon his gratitude. I am glad that I showed this generosity; that is still a comfort to me. After a silence which seemed long, there came a reference which I had half expected and feared. "I had some idle thoughts for my girl," he said; "I ought to tell you that—but a long time hence—a long time hence. There's a friend and neighbor of ours, a fine young fellow, who's pushing his fortune like a man. He's a good son, and I used to think he'd make a good husband—but years hence, years hence."

I showed a natural curiosity. "And is this young man a suitor?" I asked anxiously.

"He has never said a word," the old gentleman answered, shaking his head. "Perhaps it was no more than my fancy. I fancied that he was waiting till she had grown up; but if she

has really grown up, I think he must have said something."

"You must put him on one side too," I said with a frank smile. "I can't admit any body else's claim."

"No, no; he has no claim. It may have been my fancy. But you've been drinking nothing. Shan't we—shall we——"

As the old gentleman moved uneasily in his chair, I rose promptly from mine. I had made up my mind. In the passage I detained him with my hand on his shoulder. "At least do this for me," I said sadly but firmly: "go into your study for a little while." I pushed him gently to the door of his comfortable den. "I must speak to her," I said; "I must learn my fate."

He was rather dazed, I think. "You won't frighten her," he said; "she's a child—a mere child; you won't frighten her?"

"Ah!" I said in a tone of deep disappointment, "you don't trust me."

I felt him leap under my hand. "Whom should I trust if not you?" he cried eagerly. "You know what I owe you."

"Put that on one side," I said gravely, as I gently pushed him into his room.

The little drawing-room soothed my senses like a spell. It was all warmth, and its faded furniture was warmed to a subdued beauty of color. With the firelight flickering on the gown, and the shaded lamplight on her hair, she was bending over the wide book on her lap. I shall never forget the picture. As I came into the room she looked up. I have said that she often reminded me of an angel on a church window, an angel who awaited command. As her eyes came frankly to meet mine, I saw with a new thrill that mine was the command for which she waited. I felt my power over this lovely child. As I drew nearer, I saw her look change to a grave surprise, but she did not turn away her head. I bent down to her, and with some murmured words of tenderness pressed my lips to hers. The color left her face, but she showed no sign of fear. Only her eyes were filled with a strange wonder and awe. There are scenes too sacred for the pen. When the hour of good-night had come, and we three stood together at the foot

of the stairs, I saw that the tears ran unchecked down the cheeks of the old gentleman ; and I confess that my own eyes were not free from moisture.

I awoke the next morning from a sound and refreshing sleep, and with good courage for the task before me. I knew that that wild youth who had thrust his confidence upon me might give me trouble. I had determined to anticipate his first move. In the early dawn I went down the stairs as quietly as I could. All nature seemed to smile on me, as if it were already my marriage morning. But I had no time to note, as I love to do, the beauty of the eastern sky. I slipped out of the house into the stable-yard. I found my host's groom, whom I had already made my friend by common but efficient means, preparing to exercise the small but useful stud ; and after the usual compliments on his care of the beasts, I asked him, if he were going near the house of the troublesome young man, to leave a note there. This note was brief and to the point. In it I told my rival that it seemed to me the frankest course to inform him at once of my

engagement. I added that I had been so much puzzled and confused by his sudden and unlooked-for confidences, that I had not decided to tell him then and there of my intentions until I had seen him drive away and my chance was lost. I then gave expression to the hope (which I most sincerely felt) that, since he had been content to defer all expression of his feelings so long, they were less deeply engaged than he fancied. I finished my letter with the wish that he would always remain her friend and mine.

When I had watched the groom ride slowly away with my missive in his pocket I breathed more freely. I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the early hour and of love's young dream. My darling was exquisitely lovely and charming on that day. She was very pale and quiet; but her stillness seemed to me the outward sign of the exactly right mood: I would not have wished her a shade more lively. As I walked beside her in the little old-fashioned garden, I turned the current of my talk at last to the young man, my neighbor. The groom had returned before breakfast, but had

brought no answer to my note. I was relieved, for I had half feared a hurried and violent reply. I watched my little girl's face narrowly as I smiled carelessly upon it. I saw that at the mention of his name it brightened with open affection, but showed no trace of sentiment. She seemed to wake from her silence. "I wonder what he will say?" she said aloud with the frank curiosity of a child.

I was going to say something, when I saw the servant coming round the corner of the house with a letter in his hand. I stepped hastily between the girl and him, and took the note from him. As she strolled on with her eyes dropped to the gravel path, I stood still and read my rival's answer. I copy it here. It had no beginning and no signature. "You ought to have told me. If this is true, and she is engaged to you, I shall hold my tongue. For God's sake, be good to her. You don't know what a delicate sweet soul she is, and how noble. Be good to her." That was all. It was curt, and seemed unfriendly. He almost seemed to doubt my word; and the passionate appeal to me to be good to her seemed almost insulting.

He might have been writing to a tyrant, or an ogre, or to the villain of a three-volume novel. Like every thing which the unfortunate youth did, it was exaggerated and out of taste. As I put it away carefully in my pocket-book, I made up my mind to leave the place before night. I felt sure he would follow his note, that he would not have the good sense to keep away. A meeting would be pleasant to neither; I would not come back until he said good-by. Of course he would hasten his departure for America; I would leave the coast clear for his farewell interview. I did not fear any thing which he might say behind my back. What had he to say except that I had not imitated his ridiculous loquacity—his silly want of reserve—in a railway carriage? As for my life at large, I felt a glad confidence that no man could find any thing which was not eminently respectable either in my public or my private career. Besides, if he tried to blacken my character in the eyes of my future wife, I was sure that he would only condemn himself. Had I not seen the absolute trust—even veneration in those eyes? Ah me, for

the stability of woman ! If she had but kept her trust in me unweakened ! But—as the novelists say—to my story ! I must not linger over my task.

When I had put my rival's letter in my pocket, I made haste to the side of my beloved. Stealing my arm gently round her, I told her that I must leave her on that day. I felt her tremble, but she did not withdraw herself from me. I told her that I had broken away from most important public business, because I could not do my work until I had heard my fate from her lips ; that now I must hurry back to my duty ; that I should come to her again in the first hour of my freedom. "And did you care for me like that?" she said, with awe in her voice. I stooped to look into her eyes, and I saw that they were full of veneration. That, I said to my heart, was the true foundation for the airy palace of love. On that what might I not build ? Ah me, for the prophecies of men, where woman is the theme ! Ah me, for the crumbling of foundations, which seem strong enough to resist the ages ! My girl was strangely silent ; and I

did not wish it otherwise. She walked beside me with a beautiful docility; she neither vaulted now, nor ran races with her treacherous wolfish animal, who was puzzled by the change. She was no longer busy noting all the tiny objects in earth and air; but she led me on a little round of visits to the creatures and the corners which had been the objects of her special affection. She introduced me with perfect gravity to the last litter of pigs and to the spaniel puppies. She led me, stooping, into that nook in the midst of the tangled shrubbery, where she had played so often at keeping house—she, who was to keep a real house now. She took it for granted that I was deeply interested in these trifles which she showed me. It crossed my mind once or twice that she showed them to me as if they were to be part of our future life, as if I too were to live there with the little pigs and the rabbits in the hutch. Poor little girl! It was no part of my task on that morning to woo her from her simple visions of the future. She was strangely sweet to me. I never felt more certain of any thing than that I had made no

mistake in my choice. Her gravity had an intense charm, and her innocence an absolute fragrance. She did not laugh nor leap; she was very quiet; she took my kisses like a child. There are things too sacred for the pen. On that afternoon I left her.

The first letter which she wrote to me lies before me now. • The paper is a little crumpled, the ink perhaps a little faded; and yet it seems but yesterday that I smiled at it so tenderly for the first time. It was a prim little note; but it charmed me: its formality had an old-fashioned fragrance; it was like the lavender which her sunny garden of bees furnished so bountifully to her ancient house. She wrote that all was well; and after the latest news of her father, and of the young puppies, and of the new calf, she told me that the dusky youth had already made his farewell visit. She was so sorry that he had to go at once; she supposed that there was something wrong with his beasts, for he seemed very silent, as if he were thinking of something else; and he was to start on the very next day for Liverpool; she was very sorry. She ended with an apol-

ogy for childish hand-writing; and she signed herself "very truly" mine. I remember that when I saw the formal conclusion, written in a hand which was certainly unformed, I turned back to the beginning and noted, with a low laugh, that she had begun with "Dear Mr. ———." How sweet it would be to teach her modest lips to use my Christian name! I was delighted with her news of my would-be rival. To-day, or to-morrow at latest, he would be at sea. I telegraphed to my dear girl's father that I would be with him on the morrow. I told myself that the end of my doubts and hesitations had come. I had had quite enough of this traveling up and down, which unsettled my ideas and interfered with my work. I determined that my wedding should be performed with the least possible delay.

Of that fateful day there is next to nothing which need be said. I was full of confidence, and serenely happy. After a brief time of damp and wintry weather, the sun shone glorious on my wedding morn. And yet, if I were of a superstitious character, I might have trembled. My father-in-law was in

his most nervous state, and between his eagerness to do me honor and his unreasonable grief at losing his child, he made a series of the most ludicrous mistakes. It seemed a mere chance that he was in church to give away the bride. The bride herself was pale as a little ghost, and her great eyes looked out at me as if she were some maiden newly come into a pagan temple, and dumbly imploring with veneration and fear the clemency of her deity. But the omen—the ridiculous omen—which might have frightened a superstitious man, was this. I can laugh at it now, but at the moment it made me furious, and not unnaturally. That beast of a dog, who had prowled round me like a wolf ever since I set foot in the place, was lying at the bottom of the staircase when I came down dressed for the ceremony. I had scarcely stepped over him with some conciliatory words, when he sprang at my back and tore my new coat from top to bottom. I confess that I was frightened, and I had no time to collect myself before I was hurried to church. I was married in an old black coat and a new blue waistcoat; I

dropped the ring; I felt that I appeared from first to last to the least possible advantage. Some hours had passed before I was myself again.

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CHAPTER IV.

MANY times since I took this pen in hand have I been tempted to fling it from me, but never so strongly tempted as now. Is it not hard that a man should be compelled to lift the decent veil which hides the sacred drama of his married life? But I will not waste time in complaints. The headstrong character of another has made this task inevitable. I will make it as short as I can.

The rest of the tale which I have to tell is a tale of bitter disappointment—of my quick awakening from a foolish dream. I had made a mistake; I had now to reap the fruits. It is true that in the mere matter of money I had no reason to complain. My father-in-law was so full of gratitude to me, and of a blind devotion to his only child, that he seemed ready to give away every thing at the slightest hint. But, though I make no pretense of despising wealth, I know well that it is not the one

thing needful. It is only valuable as a means; though it might aid me to success, it was not a success. Besides, there was not enough of it. Even if we had acquired all the property of the old gentleman, we should not have been rich among the rich; our wealth would not have been a power. And though my pale young bride had brought me money, and would certainly inherit more, where was the full sympathy for which I had given myself away? Where was the loving helpmate ever ready to assist me on my upward course? Where was the trustful and helpful companion of my career? I had dreamed of that absolute union of two souls. With the folly of a boy, perhaps, I had dreamed that marriage might be no less than this. I had allowed myself to dream—and sad indeed was the awakening.

I had felt certain that my wife's social success would be of great use to me as a politician. I had counted on it. I am no less certain now that she might have enjoyed it almost without an effort. But not only would she make no effort; she even seemed to shrink

with an inexplicable repugnance from the obvious path before her. I will not be unjust to her. I can not say that she ever refused to do any thing which I told her. She obeyed me in detail ; but her obedience was spiritless. When I left her without specific commands, she did nothing. I had looked to her to court an amiable and indulgent society with all her heart—alas ! you would have thought that she had no heart at all. I was very busy ; I necessarily left her much alone. I could not be forever dictating little social duties ; if I neglected to dictate them, she sat at home and read books. She grew pale and listless. She, who had run like a young huntress in the country, would scarcely walk in London, unless I sent her out. Of course I could not let her walk alone. She took an irrational dislike to the society of her French maid, who had come with the highest character from one of the best houses. She suggested one day that she might walk with her dog, if I would let him come to us in London ; but of course it was impossible for me to have that dangerous animal in the house ; and I reminded her that collies are notoriously unhappy in

towns. So she sat at home on most days, till her silence and docility became irritating. In the evenings I took her to all the parties which were likely to be useful. Wherever we went I was complimented on her loveliness, and I perceived a sensation on all sides which was far more complimentary. Her unusual style and extraordinary beauty made her conspicuous in spite of herself. But I soon found out that men thought her dull. She did not seem to understand even the plainest compliments to her looks. She was distressed by the frank stare of admiration which is a sign nowadays of the best breeding. I was very patient with her, and kind. I trusted to time; I thought that time would work wonders.

Though I had counted on my wife's popularity with all the desirable world, I counted less on her success with men than with women. I had felt sure that her youth, her innocence, and her helplessness would appeal to the motherly instincts, which are to be found even in the most fashionable women. I had looked forward to this lovely married child being taken up by the most influential ladies of the great world;

and among these ladies I had from the first selected one who was to be enchanted beyond all the rest. At that time there was nobody who could be of more use to me than that fair marchioness whose story is now in every mouth. At that time she was a power. She was not young ; but she had an air of insolence which was more effective than youth. She was not clever ; but she made men talk to her, and never forgot to look appreciative. I need no longer hesitate to say that she was not good ; but she had so blunt a method of announcing the frailties of her female friends, that for the most part they were careful to let her character alone. Nobody can be surprised to hear now that she exercised at the time of my marriage an extraordinary influence on a prominent member of the party to which I belong. This prominent member was a friend of her husband also : the world had no right to talk. Since then the poor lady has sunk ; the man, whom she has ruined, has lost his chance of power ; and I can do no harm by this reference to an ill-omened friendship which has been discussed in every gin-palace. All this belongs now

to the unsavory history of notorious scandals. It is enough for me to say that at the time of my marriage there was nothing more likely to do me good than a friendship between this influential marchioness and my wife. That member of the party over whom the lady had such strange power was the one man to whom I then pinned my faith. Of course the influence of women on politics is not what it was. They have a formidable rival in the admirable improvement of local machinery. Nevertheless, they have still more power than the outside world will easily believe. I knew the strength of this one lady; I knew, too, that she regarded me with a certain suspicion, perhaps a suspicion of my clear sight. I counted with certainty on her capture by the guileless charm of my childlike wife. I was not mistaken. The *grande dame* was delighted with a style so unlike her own; she showed the most amiable eagerness to adopt the modest newcomer, and to introduce her to the very best people; for my wife's sake she was for the first time decently civil to me. But though this great lady took some pains to be agreeable,

my wife would not respond. She called, as I bade her; she went to tea and to luncheon, as I bade her; she accepted a seat in her new friend's victoria, because I begged her never to refuse that offer. But she was as cold as a snow image. She did what I told her, but no more. She said nothing of the marchioness, till one day she broke from her silence and said more than enough. I recall my amazement as I listened. I had no idea that she knew so much of the wickedness of the world, and I told her so. She answered passionately that it was this "woman" who had shown it to her; that she was a wicked woman, who believed in no goodness, and wished every one to be wicked like her. I was astonished. Though I listened with pain, I remember that even then I was struck by my young wife's loveliness. This glow of feeling gave color to her cheek and light to her eye. She looked like an angel still, but it was a slim Michael with a fiery sword. I was very patient with her. I made her sit beside me on the sofa, and I talked to her of the world. I pointed out to her that, whatever one's own selfish preferences, one

must live in the world, because there was no other at present. I told her that the fashionable talk of the day was worse than the conduct of fashionable people; and that it was uncharitable, if not unchristian, to think otherwise. It was not for us to condemn this lady, nor to turn our backs on her. Was it fanciful, I asked, to hope that her great liking for one so pure and innocent was the first sign of an inclination toward better thoughts and a higher level of feelings? I talked as well and as kindly as I could; and yet, before I had finished, I saw for the first time in my wife's eyes a look which I shall never forget. It was almost a look of horror. Instead of those eyes which had met mine of yore with the expression of one who waits eager to obey the directing glance—instead of the old alertness and frank trustfulness—here were eyes with something like horror in them. I was dumb for a moment. One might have thought from her look that I had proposed to beat her. Not a word too much has been said of the strangeness of women, nor of the terrible uncertainty of marriage.

If my wife had shown any eagerness to go

back to her old home, I would have taken her there at the end of the season, though it would have been highly inconvenient. But she acquiesced in all my plans with a listless obedience which was even a little dispiriting. We had several invitations, which it was well for me to accept ; and our round of visits filled so much time that I was summoned to London before I had found time to look up my father-in-law. I suggested that my wife should go to him, though I could not ; and it was when she showed no eagerness for this (though she had been parted from him for little less than a year) that I feared for the first time that she was not well. I took her with me to town. I consulted an eminent physician. During all that winter she had the best advice. Nobody could find any thing the matter with her ; but they told me that it was important to keep up her health and strength while she was in her present condition. I consulted the best doctors. I spared no expense. I have nothing to reproach myself with ; and yet how poor this consolation seems as I recall that troublous time !

Why should I linger now ? The spring

came (the second spring since my ill-omened marriage), and found my wife white as its whitest snowdrop. She told me that she must go home. I remember the pang with which I heard her speak of home, and knew that she did not mean her husband's house. I made no objection; I was glad to humor her; I was growing daily more anxious about her health. Of course it was impossible for me to go. The session had but just begun, and my hands were full. I promised to follow her at Easter. I half hoped to the last that she would not leave me to my lonely duties in London, that her heart would fail her when the moment of parting came. But she said very little when it was time to go. She looked at me with great sad eyes, when I kissed her and spoke cheerfully of our happy meeting in that dear old house where I had seen her first. I spoke cheerfully for her sake; but I was sad at my solitary dinner. How unlike it was to that ideal marriage of which I had dreamed! Alone on my hearth on that gloomy evening I almost confessed to myself that my marriage was a mistake—that it might even ruin my career.

CHAPTER V.

EASTER had not yet arrived when I was summoned to my wife. The doctor's message was peremptory ; and I obeyed it without hesitation. Of my thoughts and tender feelings on that lonely journey how can I bear to write ? As I drove from the station to the house, and saw on all sides traces of the coming of the spring, I could not believe that my sweetest flower lay nipped by winter's frost. Cool shadows lay on the cool gray front of the beautiful old house, for it was yet morning ; and I seemed to feel a chill at the ominous silence. I forgot my wife's mistakes and my disappointments ; I thought only of her young life and loveliness, and of the crisis which was at hand. On the very threshold another sorrow awaited me. The doctor, who was an old friend of my father-in-law, came to meet me, and told me rather curtly that his patient had begged that I might be kept

from her. Of course I promised obedience; I fancied that the poor child did not like me to see her when she was not in looks; I smiled, though sadly, at my fancy.

For a whole day I stole about the house noiselessly, or wandered in the little garden, or the meadow rich with primroses. I had no companion to share the burden of my grief. The old gentleman would scarcely speak; he seemed confused with anxiety to such an extent that I feared for his reason; he shut himself in his own room when he was not admitted to hers. I even tried to conciliate the dog who had torn my coat on my wedding day; but the brute would only whine and walk stiffly back with his tail drooping to the front steps, where he lay and waited for his mistress. The silence and the loneliness took hold of my nerves. I felt that I must see somebody. I could not help believing that the sight of me would have a beneficial effect on my wife, though the anticipation of a visit was too great a trial for her nerves. Convinced that my appearance must do good, I softly ascended the stairs on the second morning, and walked into the

shaded room. Her white face turned to me as I entered, and I saw in it an expression of horror. Was it not awful to read in the face of her, whom I had chosen from all women for myself, an expression of horror? I had not known that the doctor was with her, or I should have timed my visit otherwise. I did not recognize his presence till I felt him push me with scant ceremony from the room. Outside the door he told me, without the least disguise, that if my wife saw me again he would not answer for the consequences. "She has taken an overwhelming dislike of you," he said—"doubtless unreasonable," he added after a moment, "but none the less real." How sad was this to hear! If I had been anxious before, I was doubly anxious now. This causeless antipathy, this distressing mania, was a very bad sign.

It was on the next day, toward evening, that they told me that I was a father; and hardly twenty-four hours had passed away when they told me that the baby was dead. I am not ashamed to say that I wept for this little blossom untimely plucked, for this little daughter who had never seen her father.

A few more hours went from me, and I was called to the bedside of my dying wife. With what tender feelings did I cross once more the threshold! She lay like an angel, with her fair hair spread wide on the pillow. At a glance I knew that there was no hope, for she seemed hardly to recognize me. Her eyes scarcely rested on my face before they turned again to her father, who kneeled on the opposite side of the bed. I was hurt and grieved, but I forbore to press my claims to her love and duty. All her weakened thought was centered on the old man, who kneeled beside the bed with his face hidden. She seemed to croon over him like a mother with her baby; and when the faint sound ceased there was the silence of death in the room.

I wish that I could end my sad story here. Slowly the lagging hours passed away from the house of mourning, till the day of the funeral came. Of course I should have shrunk from no observance which could have done honor to the dead; but it was the wish of my father-in-law that every thing should be of the simplest. It pleased my fancy, too, that green grass

should be there instead of ponderous marble ; that the dews and the showers and the simple flowers which she loved should visit her grave in the sweet country churchyard.

The funeral was over. On the next day I was to go back to London, and to such part of my daily labors as could be transacted without undue publicity. The first pangs of sorrow were softened mercifully to a tender melancholy. I was already thinking—ah me, how pathetic it is!—that my brief married life would be to me in time no more than an episode half sad, half sweet, and almost unreal. I should go back manfully to work ; and only in the brief pauses of the strife of parties should I have leisure to muse on that boyish dream of love which might have been my ruin. I had dined alone, for my father-in-law had begged to be excused ; it was a lovely balmy evening, full of sweetness of the youthful year. I strolled out, and wayward fancy led me down the road to the quiet churchyard where I had stood on that day as chief mourner. On the morrow I should take up again the business of my life, but that one evening I might yield to tender thoughts and

sentiments. The quiet of the place and of the hour soothed my troubled spirit ; and I drew near with gentle thoughts to the sacred spot. Suddenly I felt a shock which was most painful, A black figure—black in the fading light—was flung face downward on my wife's grave. I suppose I uttered an exclamation, for in an instant he had leaped up ; and I saw that it was the savage youth, who ought to have been three thousand miles away. With the instinctive feeling of a gentleman I put out my hand, but he kept his arms by his side. He stood between me and the grave of my own wife, as if he would keep me from it. "Thank God," he said, in a hoarse, unpleasant voice, "that your baby is dead! You won't have another woman's soul to torture." He turned and kneeled on the ground, and stroked the damp grass with his hand as if I were not there. "Oh, my love!—my love!" I heard him muttering ; while I, her husband, stood close beside. I recoiled from him with horror. What a man was this ! And it is this man—this boy whose folly has almost the stamp of madness—who has compelled me to interrupt my import-

ant duties with this most melancholy task. I learned that at the first rumor of my poor wife's illness he had abandoned his duties in a moment, and had traveled unasked and unlooked for to find her. It is a mercy that he was too late to disturb with his fierce presence those last peaceful hours.

Early on the next morning I paid a last hurried visit to the churchyard; and it was on the very grave of my poor wife that I picked up the crumpled scrap of paper which has compelled me to write this melancholy tale. Though he had dropped this paper in his frenzy, I knew that he might write others, and I thus anticipate his possible attack. To the many this may seem a story of some melancholy interest; the few will recognize an episode in a life of some public utility; and I myself shall be ready to point to it at any time as the true account of a sad period of my life, and to appeal from the rash and frenzied attack of my bitter foe, whenever it may come, to this plain record of facts, with its tone of candor and sobriety.

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